

# THE CRUISE OF THE ANGEL



EDGAR PICKERING



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To Jim  
From

Kate & Ethel


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THE CRUISE OF THE "ANGEL"









THE NEXT INSTANT HE HAD COME FORWARD, SPRAWLING OVER THE ROPE.

*Frontispiece.*

P. 202.



# THE CRUISE OF THE “ANGEL”

A TALE OF ADVENTURE WITH  
“THE BEGGARS OF THE SEA”

By

EDGAR PICKERING

*Author of “True to the Watchword,” “The Dogs of War,” etc.*

WITH ORIGINAL ILLUSTRATIONS BY  
LANCELOT SPEED



LONDON  
FREDERICK WARNE & CO  
AND NEW YORK

1907

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## CHAPTER I

### IN BECCLES

THE town of Beccles was in an uproar, for the Fenwardens were to be elected that day, and my uncle, Mr. William Rede, had ridden from his house, which is called Roos Hall and lies a short distance from the town, wearing a sterner look on his face than usual, and with a more resolute bearing, to take part in the proceedings.

I was but newly come into Suffolk from London, where I had been living with my widowed mother until Mr. Rede sent word to her that he was willing to take me into his service and provide me with board and lodging at Roos Hall, the while I learnt the business in which he was engaged, namely, that of a merchant trader; and because we were poor and I had come to the age of sixteen without my occupation being decided on, my good mother accepted our kinsman's offer gladly. Mr. Rede was reported to be a rich man, but be that as it may, he was a very busy one and his *comptoir*<sup>1</sup> in Beccles,

<sup>1</sup> Counting-house.

which was hard by the river Waveney, had many visitors to it. Moreover, he was an important person in the town, and Portreeve, to say nothing of his having the ruling of the Fen, or Common, and a voice in most of the affairs of the place, exercising his authority in a hard fashion that was natural to him, and therefore he was but little liked by his townfellows.

He was kind enough to me. I wanted for nothing in the way of comfort, and although at the time I am writing of it was a rare thing for me to have a coin in my pocket, I was contented with my lot. Roos Hall, however, was a dull home, and I greatly preferred the *comptoir*, for the latter was a cheerful gathering place, where seamen and townsmen were to be met, and news heard. I remember amongst the many visitors there was a broad-built Dutch Captain, Hendrick Hooft by name, whose ship was called the *Vrow Smits* and traded betwixt Yarmouth and the Scheldt river. He spoke English fairly well, too, and was a jovial, good-tempered man from whom I learnt a smattering of Dutch, for he came frequently to Beccles, and more than once to Roos Hall, my uncle and he being on very friendly terms.

But the companion most to my liking was Amyas Meyrick, a year older than myself, and one of the





MANY AN HOUR I HAD SPENT THERE WATCHING MASTER SANDYS  
IN THE GLOW OF THE FORGE FIRE.

merriest-hearted lads ever seen. His master was Zadoc Sandys, the armourer of Beccles, whose booth stands near the new steeple of Saint Michael's Church, and many an hour I had spent there watching Master Sandys and his 'prentice as they worked away at gauntlet or helmet in the glow of the forge fire. Amyas was a lusty fellow, too, tall and broad, who could hold his own in a quarrel, although be it said that he never provoked one willingly. He had a serious look also, for all his jovial nature, and people might easily have mistaken him for a dull fellow, until he showed his true spirit.

Besides his trade of armourer, Zadoc Sandys could cast a horoscope, as 'tis called, with any astrologer in Suffolk, and sometimes even his proper business was neglected whilst he drew a forecast from the heavenly bodies for a customer. I do not profess to understand how this was done, nor the meaning of the strange figures Zadoc planned and muttered over, but I know that whilst he was thus occupied, he seemed to forget every other thing, and at such times Amyas would play truant from the armourer's workshop quite unknown to Master Sandys. Then it was that Amyas and I rambled along the river edge together, chatting as lads will at the things they would do when they came to be grown men, and sometimes we would linger amongst



the gossipers who gathered about the waterside inns, listening to many a tale of wonder told there.

Truth to tell, my labours in my uncle's business were none of the hardest, and oftentimes I stayed at home employing myself as I chose, for Mr. Rede's thoughts were more of Beccles' affairs than of his own, and upon this particular day he had bidden me remain at Roos Hall instead of going into the town. He gave no reason for this, neither did I venture to ask him for one, and, as I have already stated, he rode off down the avenue, mightily concerned in mind, I thought.

It was Ephraim Spendril who told me of the business upon which Mr. Rede had gone into Beccles, and the reason why it would be wiser of me to stay at the Hall, dull as it was, than to go to my uncle's house of business. Ephraim was a weazen-faced fellow, older than his master by twenty years, I should say, and he had been about the house all his long life he told me, and out of his regard for Mr. Rede he would have done anything to further his interest. He was a talkative man, I remember, and knew more tales of witchery and the like than anyone about those parts, so that I had a liking for his company.

He was in the stable, doctoring a sick horse, when I entered it, having seen Mr. Rede disappear

at the turning of the avenue, and Ephraim looked up, bending his back with a groan of pain, he being afflicted with some complaint that no chirurgeon could cure, and it was at its worst when the mists and fogs came rolling across the fen in winter times.

“Folks will be busy in Beccles this day,” quoth Ephraim, as he leant over the horse’s back, looking at me. “But I had rather be in this stable, master, than in the tapsters’ room at the *Mermaid*, much as I like a black jack of huff-cap. For d’ye see, this business of choosing the Fen wardens makes a wondrous noise every year, and I mind me of what happened four years ago, when Miller Gavin was like to have been killed in a brawl outside the town hall, and the constable who would have stayed the riot had enough to do to save his own skin.”

“Why should the choosing of the Fen wardens cause a riot?” I asked.

“Because Mr. Rede, your good uncle, is a man to have his own way, ill or well, and the Beccles people are for ever set on thwarting him. ’Twas in Mr. Rede’s father’s time that King Henry, after sending the monks about their business, granted a patent, as the name of the thing is, to Master Rede, which gave him power to make laws and ordinances

for governing the Common, for so runneth the words of the patent, that hath caused more mischief than a plague, and your uncle will bate none of his privileges. Why, 'twas but two years ago that Ambrose Fletcher, as worthy a man when at his trade as e'er a one in Beccles, was hanged for the rioting he was said to have had a hand in at an election. True he broke the churchwarden's rib, and might have done worse by the constable, for Ambrose had a fiery spirit, but some one hindered him. And he sang a good song, too ; but hanged he was before the door of the town hall, and 'tis said his poor sister—she who is a hard-working busker<sup>1</sup> in the market place, hath never rightly got her senses back since. A raving creature is Affery Fletcher, let me tell you, and mightily set on having vengeance on Mr. Rede for his share in Ambrose's hanging. But there, there, all that is but an idle tale, yet 'twill be best for you to stay here this day, rather than to risk getting a broken head in Beccles."

Then Ephraim stooped again, so that he was almost lost sight of in the gloom of the stable, and not another word could I get out of him, although what he had said made me resolve to see of what sort this election of the Fen wardens might be, so

<sup>1</sup> Staymaker,

I went back into the house and thence down the avenue into the roadway which leads to the town, speedily discovering that Beccles, as I said before, was in an uproar.

Over the bridge and past the chapel that stands there went I, with more people than I had ever seen in the street before, and presently Zadoc Sandys' sign came into view, which is a helmet swinging beneath the gaping mouth of a copper griffin, that pours a torrent on passers by when the weather is rainy. But the booth was as silent as if the day were a saint's day or Sabbath, for there was no tinkle of hammer on anvil, nor smoke from the forge. The workshop was unshuttered, however, and I went into it, hoping to find Amyas there, yet seeing nothing but Zadoc Sandys' red head swaying to and fro above the curtain of the door, which separated his living room from the booth. He had a great hooked nose, and across it straddled a pair of horn-rimmed glasses, Zadoc being as blind as a bat in day time without them. Then I saw him hold up his long forefinger, droning out some words which I stepped forward to listen to behind the curtain.

"The quartile of Mercury and Mars," mumbled Zadoc, groaning again, "with Mercury as principal significator! Alas, poor Master Claypole that your horoscope promises to be such an unhappy one;

for this portends high crimes and felonies that are most dolorous tidings for any man, let alone the constable of Beccles, forsooth. Moreover, the sun is in the twelfth house, to speak naught of Saturn being in opposition to Mars, which is a sure promise of strife, and Master Roger Claypole is to be married come Saint Swithin, his day," and here the astrologer's voice died away into a whisper, as he bent over his work of casting the constable's nativity again.

I did not wait to hear anything further, because the reason was plain why Amyas was not at his bench. He had taken holiday that morning and was doubtless somewhere in the town, which was humming like a beehive, and there was the sound of many feet upon the stones. There were shouts now and again, and angry voices rising above the confused noise, so I hastened down the street, becoming hemmed in by the crowd which was pressing towards the town hall, and in a short time I found myself before the door of the hall, in the midst of a rough throng.

Some one was haranguing the crowd from an upper window of the building, and maybe he was giving good advice, but a stone hurled from the mob went crashing through the lattice and he disappeared suddenly, amid a roar of laughter from the street. Then it seemed as if the uproar had got into the town

hall itself, for a babel of fierce voices in the room from which the man had spoken could be heard.

The next moment two others came to the window, one of whom was Roger Claypole, the constable, and the other Master Elisha Tibbet, the churchwarden, who had supped with us no later than yesternight at Roos Hall, and a dull fellow the churchwarden was, I remember.

“Good people,” he began shouting, “this tumult is likely to bring every one of you into trouble, as being against the peace of our sovereign lady Queen Elizabeth. For the Portreeve and other goodly persons are about their lawful business of choosing the Fen wardens. Master William Rede to wit, to say nothing of——” But I heard no more, for a volley of stones was suddenly hurled at the window, one of the missiles striking the churchwarden on the ear so shrewdly, that he clapped his hand to the part, howling in great pain, and sank out of sight.

Now if the mob were uproarious before, it was doubly so at the mention of my uncle’s name; and then some one had thrown a great book out of the town hall window, the leaves all aflame, and this was followed by a shower of burning papers which flew hither and thither in the breeze, until they fluttered downward and were trodden in the mire.



The mob had found its way into the hall and was burning the town books and records. The cry went up that this was the work in progress, and that now or never was the time for the men of Beccles to win the battle that had been waged for years between them and Mr. Rede touching the choosing of the Fen wardens. A trifling matter to record, perhaps, but it was to prove a very momentous one to me, and if I could have foreseen the end of it, and in what manner I was to be affected by the riot, I should have taken Ephraim Spendril's advice and stayed at home that day.

For suddenly some one in the crowd pointed his hand at me, and another had struck at my face, crying, "Have at him. He is another of the Redes to play the tyrant over us."

He was right as to my name, which is plain Thomas Rede, but as to my playing tyrant over any one, that was only to be laughed at, for I was as poor as the poorest burgess of Beccles, and knew naught, save what Ephraim Spendril had told me, of the matters in dispute between my uncle and the townspeople. Yet the cry had gone out against me, and in a moment I was being buffeted about, struck at by a dozen brawny fists, and at my wits' end to know how to escape from the danger which threatened me. Then a wild-looking woman, whose black hair

was streaming in the wind, had forced her way through the crowd, shouting my uncle's name, and I guessed she must be the unfortunate sister of Ambrose Fletcher whose senses had left her.

How it would have fared with me I cannot say if at that moment some one had not come to my rescue. For by a happy chance Amyas Meyrick, who was in the crowd, discovered me, he and I together fighting a passage through it, until at last we reached the entrance of a narrow opening to a lane, and down this we ran with some of the crowd after us. The rest of the mob had gone back to the town hall, I suppose, where better work was on hand than hunting two defenceless lads, and without doubt we should have escaped safely if one of those who pursued us had not cast a stone which hit me on the shoulder and sent me reeling to the ground. Then Amyas was standing astride me, and I saw him whip out a little dagger from his belt as a man came rushing at him.

## CHAPTER II

### AFTERWARDS

**I** CANNOT say exactly what had happened, but as I staggered to my feet it was to see Amyas struggling with one of our pursuers, and another of them lying with his face in the mud, still as a dead man. I was in such a mad rage, for my shoulder was wringing with pain, that I paid no heed to anything but having vengeance on some one, and so, with a dexterous putting of my foot against the heel of the man who was pressing Amyas hardly, and giving the fellow a sturdy blow between his fierce eyes, I sent him to earth, where he lay as quietly as his companion, and then Amyas and I were fleeing for our lives again. Reaching a place which was quite deserted of its inhabitants, who were howling and fighting before the town hall, we stayed a moment to recover our breath ; and Amyas gave a cautious look round the corner of a house in the direction of the street which led to the armourer's booth.

“What of the fellow who lay so quietly?” I asked hastily, and Amyas made a wry face.

“I am afraid he is likely to be quiet for ever,” he replied; “for I drove my dagger up to the hilt into his side. And a fine to do there will be about it ere long, but that cannot be helped now. We shall be clapped into the lock-up and hanged as sure as my name is Amyas.”

Then a sudden fear seized me that he spoke only too truly, for if we were caught red-handed, nothing could save us from the gallows. People were hanged for much less than Amyas had done, and although he had only defended himself, having no more desire to slay any one than I myself, it would avail him nothing. I should share the same punishment, doubtless, spite of my uncle being Portreeve and an important person in the town; and there we stood so perplexed and troubled that we knew not which way to turn.

“I must get me out of Beccles,” said Amyas at length, “’prentice or no ’prentice, and hide until this affair is either forgotten or forgiven. So fare thee well, Thomas Rede, and if so be that Master Sandys inquires after me, bid him have patience. There are three years of my indentures to serve, and if he can make my peace with the justices, I will come back to the workshop.”

He was on the point of leaving me when I stayed him a moment. "We have got into danger together, Amyas," I said, "and I would like to know that you are safe out of it. Send me word, an you are able, of the place where you are to be found."

"In good time," he answered. "But at this present I know not whither way to go. True, I have a pious cousin in Cambridge, but I doubt me whether he would not think it his duty to get me into prison, so I shall not go to Cambridge. And Norwich, where lives my step-mother, is no safer. She always foretold my being hanged, and would glory in knowing her prophecy had come true. So I must e'en trust to myself and get me where I am not known."

He had said all this in a hurried manner, and whilst he did so, we heard the roar of the mob come nearer and louder. There was not a moment to be lost if we were to get away undiscovered, and I saw Amyas glide silently round the corner of the house, and then I had gone also. The road out of the town was safely gained, and not caring to venture myself at the armourer's booth, I made my way back to Roos Hall, troubled in no ordinary manner by the events in which I had taken part that morning.

Ephraim Spendril was standing at the porch as I came up to the house, and he cast a sour look

at me, for my clothes were torn in half-a-dozen places and muddled.

"You have been in Beccles, I see," he said in his grim way. "Did I not tell you that it would be best to stop here? Lucky it has been no worse than a torn doublet with you, Thomas Rede."

"It has been a good deal worse," I answered, "and the end will be worst of all, I fear. The mob set upon me, and my shoulder is aching as if it were broken."

"That comes of having your own way," he grinned; and I grew angry with him for that. "There will be plenty of aches and pains, broken shoulders and heads too, and work for the justices to-morrow. 'Twould not be election day if there were not all this."

"Is my uncle come home?" I asked. "I was at the town hall, Ephraim, where the mob was burning the books and papers. The constable and churchwarden could not stay the riot, and the crowd was so thick that I had hard work to get free from the press. I saw Ambrose Fletcher's sister, for such I guessed a mad woman to be, and this is not all I have to tell."

Whilst we were speaking the sound of a horse was heard coming up the avenue, and in a moment my uncle was seen riding at a gallop towards the



porch where, bringing the animal almost to its haunches as he checked himself, he sprang from the saddle.

“I had not hoped to have seen you again,” he said, giving me a meaning look. “Thank Heaven you are here. The story goes that you have had a hand in the fighting to-day by which one of the principal burgesses of Beccles has been so sorely hurt that ’tis thought he will die of his wound. Come into the house, for we must settle in what way you can escape the consequences of your mad exploit.”

We hurried into the hall, Ephraim going with us, and in a few words my uncle made it clear to me that I was in danger of arrest. For the news had spread that the man who had been struck was so near death that it might be said he was already dead, and information had been laid against me as having been one of those by whom the mischance had come.

Now although I knew that I was not to blame (and it is a good thing to have one’s conscience clear of any wrongdoing) it would matter not one whit to say so. My uncle told me that the people of Beccles were so bitter against any one whose name was Rede, that I should have little hope of escaping punishment for what had happened, and

the only thing to be done was for me to be got away as soon as possible.

“I am not blaming you, my lad,” quoth Mr. Rede, speaking more kindly than was his wont, “for, truth to tell, I have a score to settle with the people of Beccles myself. Never was such a lawless business as has gone forward this day, and there will be those who shall be made to smart for it ere long. Yet we have something else to think of at present, and that is your safety.”

Ephraim had listened whilst my uncle spoke, and there was such a solemn look on his face that it seemed to make the occasion more melancholy than ever.

“You are a tender age to go to the gallows,” he said thoughtfully. “Yet younger than you have been hanged. But keep a stout heart, Master Thomas; maybe the justices will have a merciful pity for you. There was a lad no older than yourself who might have got off scot free, for all that he was shrewdly believed to have stolen a sheep, if the constable had not laid the charge against him of having had a half brother who suffered for breaking open the house of a well-to-do shopman in Lowestoffe, and therefore——”

“Hold your prating tongue, Ephraim,” exclaimed Mr. Rede, interrupting him angrily. “The

case is bad enough without your dismal stories to it."

"Dismal stories, quotha!" retorted Ephraim. "Dismal say you, but 'tis true enough that for sheepstealing, housebreaking, robbing on the highway, and manslaying, one swings as surely as they were born, so that they be caught."

"Which is good reason for the lad to be got out of harm's way," replied my uncle. "Yet I am sorely puzzled to know in what manner this may be."

"I remember me, that when Silas Spendril, who was no more than a second cousin of mine, and the saints be praised for that, was thought to have robbed the sacristy of Saint Clement's Church in Oldchester of a silver gilt chalice and the priest's alb, that the hue and cry being fierce after him, he crossed the seas to save his neck. Moreover, he grew rich; rumour having it that he mended his way of living by harassing the Queen's enemies, the Spanish, and seizing every vessel of theirs worth pillaging, so that in his latter days Silas was esteemed a godly person, having given the church in Oldchester a better chalice than had been stolen from it."

Ephraim's words, drawled out lengthily, caused my uncle to rise suddenly to his feet. "Crossed the seas," he exclaimed. "Ay, that is the best thing for you to do, my lad, and by good Providence

the chance is to hand. Captain Hooft is lying at Lowestoffe, meaning to sail to-morrow for Antwerp, and you shall go with him. I have a friend there, one Mynheer Jansen Brandt, who will give you shelter, and if you are minded to work for him, some employment in his warehouse, where you may learn more of a merchant's business than in Beccles. Time presses and every moment lessens the chance of your escape, so you must delay no longer."

I was so taken by surprise that for the moment I could not answer him. The prospect of leaving England and going to a foreign country made me almost forget the danger that threatened me. It was plain that my uncle was in earnest too, and that he intended my carrying out his plan forthwith, for he ordered Ephraim to saddle a horse for my use.

"'Twill be safer that you ride to Lowestoffe to-night," he told me. "I doubt whether it were wise for you to be seen abroad in daylight, and meantime there are some preparations to be made for your journey."

With this he sat down and began writing a missive, which I was to deliver to Captain Hooft, who would be found at the *Mermaid* inn at Lowestoffe, he told me, and I was to be guided by what Captain Hooft directed me to do. I can see my good uncle now,

as he sat at the table, carefully inditing the billet, and the thoughtful manner in which he folded and sealed the paper. Then he bid me gather such things as I might require for my voyage, and this I did, putting them into a leathern valise which he gave me. He, too, seemed to have forgotten for the time what had happened in the town that morning, and for the rest of the last time which I spent in Roos Hall for many a long day, he talked seriously to me, bidding me be guarded in my conduct and manners whilst with Mynheer Jansen Brandt, and that so soon as it would be prudent for me to return to Beccles I should do so.

I cannot say whether I was rejoiced or grieved at parting from him, for my wits were somewhat astray. The unexpectedness of it all ; the brawl that morning in which I had shared ; the memory of the wounded man lying bleeding in the roadway, and the thought of Amyas—as to whether he had been hindered in escaping or was happily out of harm's way, all came to confuse me, and the time went swiftly until the shadows of night began to gather.

Then Ephraim came into the room, limping and muttering, to whom Mr. Rede spoke some words in an undertone that I did not trouble to understand clearly, after which we went down into the stable yard where stood my uncle's favourite horse

ready saddled. Having strapped the valise securely on the horse's back, I mounted quickly, looking down into Mr. Rede's pale face, in the light of the lantern which Ephraim held.

"You will ride cautiously," he said, "for it promises to be a dark night, and the road is none of the best. Remember the advice I have given you regarding Jansen Brandt, and send me word when you are safe beneath his roof."

I promised to do this, and we went out of the stableyard, across the grounds to a gate in the wall whence I should start on my journey. There was a little more said, but I forget to what purpose, and then I was alone with the keen wind blowing on my face as I rode away from Roos Hall.



## CHAPTER III

### I GO TO ANTWERP

BECAUSE of the many more important things which it is my purpose to record than the events which happened that day and evening when I left home, I will not delay in describing my long lonely ride into Lowestoffe, where I arrived in safety to find Captain Hooft comfortably seated before the fire in the *Mermaid*. He read my uncle's letter through slowly, puckering his broad face, for it was difficult for him to understand written English, I think, and when he had finished reading he turned to me, as I sat at the table upon which some food had been set.

"Yes," he said in his deliberate way; "you shall go with me, and that so soon as the *Vrouw Smits* is ready for sailing. Your good uncle is a very worthy man, and I would do much to serve him. As for Mynheer Brandt—well, you shall find out soon whether you will like Mynheer Brandt. He is a fiery-tempered man, but honest. Yes,

Mynheer is honest," and Captain Hooft gave a little chuckle, his blue eyes twinkling as he stood with his broad body keeping the warmth of the fire from me.

He asked me no questions as to the reason for my leaving my uncle's house, and I did not deem it necessary to inform him, although my thoughts were busy enough thinking of Amyas, and in what manner he was faring. I was fearful, too, of every step I heard outside the room, dreading the visit of the constable to haul me to prison, yet I made a good meal withal, and presently Captain Hooft and I left the inn, going to the shore where a boat was waiting for him—a boat which seemed too small for his big body, for as he stepped into it the gunwale came level to the water's edge well nigh, and it seemed to me that the least movement would overturn it. The *Vrow Smits* was riding a little way off, and we reached her without any mishap however, and climbing on board her littered deck I stood gazing about me, until Captain Hooft bid me descend to the cabin. Here I found a comfortable berth, and being exceedingly wearied with my long ride and want of rest, I lay down, falling asleep almost directly I had done so, nor did I awake until the *Vrow Smits* was far at sea, and out of sight of land.

It was an uneventful voyage for all that Captain Hooft had fears of the sea-robbers who infested the coasts of Holland, and in due time we entered a broad river which he told me was the Scheldt, and up this we sailed, until the city of Antwerp came into view, lying on the bank of the river, which is some four hundred yards in width at this part, where was a great deal of shipping; and as soon as the *Vrouw Smits* had been moored, Captain Hooft and I went ashore.

Never yet had I seen such a magnificent city as Antwerp, which for its great buildings and signs of wealth far exceeded London even. It was a very busy place too, and strongly fortified on the land side, Captain Hooft telling me the names of the various places we passed on our way to Mynheer Jansen Brandt's house, which we came up to presently.

It stood apart from the other houses in the street, and had a tall gabled front, richly carved and painted. There was a gate of ironwork at the side of it, and glancing through this I had a glimpse of a garden, where a maiden was amongst the flowers, and as we lingered a moment she glanced up, smiling at Captain Hooft, who doffed his cap in return. It was a very beautiful face which I saw, and I fell to wondering as to whom the maiden might be,

when a lad about my own age came out from the house, greeting Captain Hooft with a hearty handshake. His fair hair lay on his shoulders, and there was such a merry look in his eyes that I took a great liking to him. Then he turned to me, asking my name, which I told him.

He was Pretorius Brandt, and we went with him to the warehouse, where was all manner of merchandise piled high, until it almost touched the ceiling, and beyond was an inner room, where sat a hard-faced man about my uncle's age, dressed in a furred gown of some rich material, to whom Captain Hooft gave the letter which Mr. Rede had written.

During the time Mynheer Jansen Brandt read, which he did pursing his lips and shaking his head solemnly now and again, I looked about me curiously. There was a wonderful timepiece in a corner of the room, which had two eyes in the dial that looked first at Captain Hooft and then at me, as we stood waiting for Mynheer Brandt to speak, and besides this there were many other strange things that roused my curiosity. The window was of painted glass, partly open, so that I could see the garden through it, and presently the girl I had noticed already came peeping in at the casement with a wondering look at seeing us all so still and silent in

the room. Then Mynheer Brandt put the letter aside and spoke to me.

“ You are welcome here,” he said in English, and kindly too, yet as if he were thinking of something a great deal more important than myself, or my business, such as it was. “ But your uncle might have chosen a safer place than Antwerp at the present time for you to live in. He has asked me to find you employment in my service, and that is an easy thing to do. There will be work for every one in the city ere long, but of a sort very different from trading and the making of money. Is it not so, Captain Hooft ? ”

“ Unless one is willing to be devoured by their enemies,” replied Captain Hooft, which seemed to me one of the strangest answers ever heard, although it was not long before I discovered the meaning of it. After this, Mynheer Brandt and he talked about some business which did not concern me, and presently Pretorius, plucking my sleeve, pointed to the door, which I took to mean that there was no further need for me to stay in the room, so I followed him out of it into the street and from that to the garden, where I looked about me, noticing the beauty of it, and hoping to catch another sight of the maiden whom I saw upon my coming to the house. She had disappeared, however, and passing beneath the

window of Mynheer Brandt's room that overlooked the garden, Pretorius and I came to another gate which opened to the side of a canal, upon which some gaudily painted boats went lazily towards a curious-looking bridge, and we walked along beneath a row of trees in the pleasant sunshine that lay warm there.

I understood enough of the language in which Pretorius spoke to find out that the girl was his sister, Anna by name, and that their mother had been dead some years. Also that he was greatly pleased at the prospect of my coming to live with them, in the big, rambling old house. Indeed, by the time we retraced our steps it seemed to me that Pretorius and I had known each other much longer than an hour or two, and we were the best of friends already. I had told him the reason for my leaving my home in England, and what had happened in Beccles, giving him an account of poor Amyas Meyrick, and the fears I had that he had not been so lucky as I in escaping.

Upon our return Mynheer Brandt called me into his room, where he gravely advised me to keep from quarrelling in the future, which would bring me into fresh trouble if I failed to be careful. And then he asked me if I were willing to enter his service, to which I made answer that satisfied him.

Yet it was strange to notice that all the time he was speaking his thoughts strayed away from the subject, and I almost doubted whether he gave any great heed to it. He was saying something to me regarding the work that I was to undertake, when our conversation was interrupted by the entrance of a tall, thin man, whose ruff was hanging by one button to the neck of his torn doublet, and his face was the colour of a half-ripe plum. He had the biggest nose I had ever seen, and it seemed to me that one of his eyes looked down it, whilst the other regarded Mynheer Brandt with a stare.

"Hast heard the news?" he shouted, pushing past me and striding forward, "the worst news that has come to Antwerp for many a day, friend Brandt, and I have hastened hither from a meeting of the "Peacemakers," where the tidings have been discussed an hour or longer, and if we came to high words, they were none of my seeking. Beshrew me ! where is the end of my ruffle ? " and he began fishing for it, with his hands behind his back, twisting now this way and now that, and he was doing this when, at a sign from Mynheer Brandt, I quitted the room.

Pretorius was waiting for me in the warehouse, and I asked him the name of the strange creature



who had interrupted my talk with Mynheer Brandt, at which he burst into a hearty laugh.

“You are like to see more of Cornelius Vondel,” he said. “That is the man’s name who is in the room yonder with my father. Cornelius is a tailor by trade, and one of those who call themselves the ‘Peacemakers,’ yet a more quarrelsome lot of men never was. I suppose he has fallen out with some one, and had his clothes torn.”

“He said there was some strange news to tell your father,” I continued, as we walked onwards, but Pretorius only shrugged his shoulders without replying, and because of the strangeness of the sights around me I speedily forgot Cornelius Vondel. We went into the great cathedral and round the citadel, which is a mighty strong place, and it was getting towards evening before we returned home, finding that Mynheer Brandt was absent. His daughter was alone in the house, except for the servants, and as we three sat at supper, Pretorius gave his sister an account of our ramble through the city, Anna laughing merrily at my description of Mynheer Vondel, her bright eyes and sweet voice making me forget to eat, hungry though I had been after my long walk.

And now having described the manner of my coming to Antwerp, and how I became an inmate

of the merchant's house there, I may say here that I was more than contented in it, and as the days went swiftly by the memory of the old time in Beccles seemed to fade away. The work which Mynheer Brandt employed me on was soon understood, and outwardly at least everything went on in a quiet, lazy fashion, although it was impossible not to notice the unrest which was in the city. Our house lay at some little distance from the busy part of it, and its quiet was rarely disturbed. Indeed, it might have been thought that Mynheer Brandt's business had come to an end, for the visitors whom I saw in the warehouse neither bought nor sold, and it was not long before I found out the reason for all this. Meantime, I was happy in the companionship of Pretorius, and happier still when I thought of sweet Anna Brandt, who called me brother and was the readiest pupil ever known in learning English, which in my clumsy way I made shift to teach her during the long evenings, when she and Pretorius and I sat in the low ceilinged dining-room together.



## CHAPTER IV

GERARD DICKERS

I had been with Mynheer Brandt close on a month when he came from his room one morning, bidding me go upon an errand, and glad enough to escape for a time from the dull, lifeless warehouse, where, as I had already said, but little business was carried on now, I took the letter which he gave me, going in the direction of the cathedral, the house which I had to visit lying near this. I knew my way fairly well about the city now, or at least the busiest parts of it, and having executed my errand, which was soon done, I was on my way home again, when suddenly a crowd of people came pouring down the street which leads to the Guildhall, and such a commotion was there, that I drew aside into a porchway wondering at the noise and tumult. In the middle of the street marched a regiment of soldiers, whose passage thrust the ordinary wayfarers against the houses, and for a moment or two there was a great confusion.

It was no new sight to see companies of armed men passing, for Antwerp was crowded with them, as it may be said—soldiers, some of whom by their look and bearing betrayed their trade to be fighting, and others who had the appearance of being plain citizens, for they wore their weapons awkwardly, and as if the bearing of arms were a strange thing to them. It was a company of the latter who marched down the street ; tall men and short men, row by row, and I knew them to be some of the newly raised troops of whom Pretorius had told me. But of these I shall have to speak anon, and I paid little heed to them as they straggled along through the mud, pushing aside gentle and simple alike. I was thinking of a good many things other than this as I stood waiting for the crowd to clear a little, when coming towards me I saw a gaily dressed young man whose haughtiness seemed to be mightily disturbed by the hustling crowd. And then to my great surprise I beheld Anna Brandt amid it, her blue eyes having a little look of dismay in them, and as she was pressed backward, a gallant stepped to her with a smile on his face. I saw him bend down, speaking to her, and then she made an effort to escape, which he hindered.

“ Indeed I am quite safe,” I heard her say, for I had moved from the porchway and was now close to





"WHY DO YOU REPULSE ME, MISTRESS ANNA?"

her. "I do not need any help, Mynheer Dickers."

"But I will at least see you to your home," he answered. "Your father would be glad for me to do you this service. Why do you repulse me, Mistress Anna?"

Anna tossed her head in the prettiest way, and tried to pass him. "Nay, I do not repulse you," she said, laughing, but I knew that she was offended at being thus spoken to. "I am used to being alone, and am close home now," and at this his face grew dark and angry. So I reasoned with myself that the moment had come for me to speak, which I did in a way that caused Mynheer Dickers to draw himself up more haughtily than ever, regarding me with a kind of insolence that was not to be borne patiently, and I thrust between them.

"Out of my way, fellow," he exclaimed, yet not daring to lay a hand on me. "Such as you are soon dealt with in Antwerp."

"Maybe," I answered quietly, for Anna was by, and I had no wish to quarrel in her presence. "I know not Antwerp manners, but if yours are the custom, 'tis time they were altered."

Anna had placed her little hand on my arm, and if there had been twenty Mynheer Dickers opposing me, I would have dared them all at that instant when I turned my face to hers.



"I am on my way home, Mistress Anna," I said; "we will go together, if this gentleman will but stand out of the path," and for a strange thing he did so, and nimbly too.

"I was not aware that you knew this fellow," he exclaimed, eyeing me from head to foot. "He is a servant of your father, I suppose."

"He is my brother's friend, Mynheer Dickers," answered Anna, and at this he made us a low bow, which was as insolent as his words had been, but I paid no further heed to that, as Mistress Anna and I passed on, leaving him gazing after us.

"Who is that man who spoke to you?" I asked, when we were out of his hearing, and she told me he was the son of one of the chiefest men in the city, and a rich man, yet not another word would Anna speak of the little scene. I suppose she told Pretorius of what had happened, for he spoke to me about it later in the day.

"You will be wise to be on your guard against Mynheer Dickers," he said warningly. "He is a man whom I greatly dislike, for all that he is friendly with my father, and has been often at our house. He has asked my father's consent to be betrothed to my sister, but she will not listen to his proposal."

We were in the warehouse when Pretorius told me this, seated at the desk, which was covered with

great books of accounts and papers, for all that business had seemed to have come to a standstill days ago, and I should have asked him further questions that were on the tip of my tongue, if the quiet of the place had not been suddenly broken by the entrance of a man who had thrown open the door of the warehouse noisily. He was a round-faced, round-bodied little fellow, and so out of breath that it was a moment or two before he could tell us his business.

“What has happened?” asked Pretorius, giving me a sidelong look. “You are in trouble, maybe, Mynheer Kinkers.”

“Trouble, say you?” replied the other, thumping on the writing desk with his chubby fist. “Yes, truly, I am, and so is every one in Antwerp likely to be ere long, unless something other than talking is done. Is Mynheer Brandt within, for I would have a word with him, although I am scarce fit to talk to any one, having been browbeaten and reviled, not to say evilly slandered, and that by Cornelius Vondel, no less?”

“My father is not at home,” replied Pretorius, looking at me again, “neither do I know when he will return. How did it come about that you were so badly treated?”

“Because I chose to speak my mind freely. There

has been fine work going forward this day at the Guildhall, where the citizens met to discuss the perilous times in which we are living. There were the Dean of the gardeners' guild, the Dean of the butchers' guild, the tailors', the smiths', and the other crafts, and one might have thought some business would have gone forward. I, who am the chief of the College of the 'Silent Men,' had said but half a dozen words, being no great talker at any time, and least of all when talking cannot help matters overmuch; I, then, had but just opened my mouth when Cornelius, who is Dean of the College of the 'Peacemakers,' must interrupt me, which was an insolent thing to do, and in a moment the guild-chamber was in an uproar. For you must know that unless the great dyke of Kowenstyn is cut, according to the express command of King William (rest his soul), who foresaw the peril that was likely to beset us all in Antwerp, we shall be undone, captured, pillaged, racked, and slaughtered by the Spaniards, who are at our very gates, as it may be said, and threatening us with all the engines of war, having at their head a truly bloodthirsty chief, Alexander Farnese, the Duke of Parma, who has a free hand to deal with the rebels, as he hath the ill nature to call the citizens of Antwerp, and to subdue the city, to take it by force of arms and turn us all

to the faith of his master, King Philip of Spain. I am but telling the story that every one knows already, and unless something be done, there will come more destruction and sorrow upon us than the Black Death brought, which carried off three thousand of the citizens, and amongst them my sainted grandmother in the year '15, who was a worthy woman and greatly respected, be it said."

He was so out of breath by this time that his voice failed him, and at the moment Mynheer Brandt came into the warehouse, giving Mynheer Kinkers a sour look. Then they went together into the inner room, where I could hear their voices indistinctly only, and Pretorius pushed aside the books and papers on the desk.

"I begin to think we have done with accounts and the like for a long time," he said. "This is no news which Poot Kinkers has told us, for truly Antwerp is in danger. But worst of all is the quarrelling amongst the citizens, for every one seems at enmity with his neighbour, and what with their disputes, nothing is being done in our defence. My father has told me about this project of cutting the Kowenstyn dyke, so that the land lying between it and the city would be flooded, and ships able to reach Antwerp, which they cannot do now, by reason of the river being so closely guarded by the Spanish."

That I might understand him better, Pretorius drew a little plan roughly, making clear to me the importance of the great dyke being cut that crosses the land from the right bank of the river Scheldt, which would have been done some time ago, he said, but that the murder of King William had hindered it."

"Why is it not done?" I asked.

"Because the meadow-land whereon the butchers graze their cattle would be destroyed," said Pretorius, "and the guild of the butchers will hear nothing of the dyke being cut; so what with them and the guilds of the fishmongers, tailors, gardeners, the 'Peacemakers,' the 'Silent Men' and a dozen others, Antwerp is left defenceless."

He was telling me this, when his father came out of his room with Poot Kinkers, and so soon as the latter had gone from the warehouse, Mynheer Brandt came to where we were sitting, and his face was more serious than I had ever seen it.

"It is time for every one to bestir himself in right earnest," he told us. "I have just heard that the fortress of Saint Mary has fallen, and the garrison been put to the sword by the Spaniards. Moreover, there is something very like war itself within this city, and these chattering, quarrelling Deans of the Guilds and Colleges think more of

their own interests than preserving Antwerp from her enemies. I would that the Duke of Parma had the dealing with them."

And then he went on to describe the great danger that beset the city, explaining to me what I had but partly understood before, although I had not lived a month in Antwerp without learning something of the state of the country around, and of the great struggle being made by the new Dutch Republic, as that part of the Netherlands was called, of which Antwerp was the principal city, that had renounced allegiance to Spain.

I did not at this time understand the rights or wrongs of the quarrel between Spain and the Netherlands, but I know that it brought me into many strange and hazardous adventures. And not only myself, but others whom I regard as my best and truest friends; and especially one who was to be something a great deal dearer to me than the closest friend could ever be, although I will not speak further on that point here.

The king, "William the Silent," was dead, having been murdered by a Burgundian named Gerard, and Antwerp was upon the eve of a long and cruel siege. King Philip of Spain had given one of his ablest generals, the Duke of Parma, command to seize Antwerp at all cost, and to that end an army of

the Spanish was preparing to lay siege to it, the city already beginning to suffer in consequence of its supplies of food and other necessaries being cut off, for very few ships had come either up or down the Scheldt, being prevented from so doing by the enemy's forts that were upon the banks of the river. A blockhouse had been built by the Spanish at a place called Borcht, which was an especial source of danger to shipping, and already caused a great deal of mischief to vessels in their attempts to get past the spot.

This and a great deal more I learnt from Mynheer Brandt, as he spoke to us that afternoon in his warehouse ; and when he returned to his own room, Pretorius and I, having nothing to keep us at home, went to the Guildhall, where the noise and confusion were more than I can describe. Saint Aldegonde, the burgomaster, was at the further end of the hall, I remember, surrounded by a number of people who seemed to be all talking at once, and we were forcing our way out of the hot place, when a handsome man, whose age might have been about five-and-twenty, as I judged, came towards us, greeting Pretorius heartily. The stranger gave me a glance, and maybe my looks pleased him, for he asked my name and whether I were willing to serve in the defence of the city.



“Let us get away from this noisy place,” he said. “I have something to say to you, Pretorius Brandt,” and so we elbowed our way to the door, going into another part of the Guildhall.

The young man who had spoken to Pretorius was Gustavus Teligny, as valiant a fighter and as skilful a commander as any of those whose names have been handed down in history, and he had already shown his gallantry in the face of the enemy. He was raising a company, who were known afterwards, as “Teligny’s Bachelors,” and the room where we had come to was the place in which those subscribed their names who were willing to be enrolled.

“The time has come when every man in Antwerp is needed in defence of our lives and liberty,” said Teligny, “and I mistake you, Pretorius Brandt, if you be not willing to join my company.”

I saw my companion’s face flush as he listened, and I waited a moment for his answer. Mine was ready, for the fear of what might chance to those who were more than friends to me, if the Spaniards gained possession of the city, had beset me many a time. For this reason, then, I gave my name to an officer who sat at a table, and with Pretorius was enrolled in the company of “Bachelors.”

When this had been done we returned home, where Mynheer Brandt received the news with a grave satisfaction, and thus it was that the adventures I have to record had their beginning.

## CHAPTER V

### HOW BOIS LE DUC WAS SAVED

ALTHOUGH I was ignorant in the main, as I have said, as regarded the war between King Philip of Spain and the Netherlands, it was very clear to me that the city of Antwerp was in no small danger. The talk which I listened to in Mynheer Brandt's house was of nothing now but the peril of famine that would soon threaten the citizens, whilst the Prince of Parma had ample supplies, so that his campaign was not likely to fail from the want of food for his soldiers, and one of his chief sources of provisioning the troops was the city of Bois le Duc, that is in Brabant, and was held for the King of Spain, although the other towns in that part had espoused the cause of the Republic.

It satisfied me to think that I might lend my aid, small as it was, on behalf of those whom I had come to look upon as the dearest friends, and after enrolling myself under the command of Teligny, Pretorius and I busied ourselves in learning the proper

handling of the snaphaunce with which each of us was armed. It was a clumsy weapon to use, but we soon became expert at firing at a mark, and in other ways we prepared for the services for which we had joined Gustavus Teligny's company.

We were together in the *comptoir* one afternoon, and I remember the melancholy look the place wore, for all the usual business carried on there formerly seemed at an end, and as we went through the movements of loading our snaphaunces, adjusting the stand by which it is supported when fired, Cornelius Vondel came in to us, standing astride, very like a pair of compasses, for his legs were exceeding thin, and there was a sour smile on his face.

"There will be shrewd work afoot ere long," he began, "and it rejoices me to think I am to take part in it. The sight of my marching out of the city with armour on my back and weapons in my hand will stay the slanderous chatter of a good many, I warrant you."

"What is the news?" asked Pretorius, "and of what sort is the slander you speak about?"

"'Tis a thing not to be spoken of," replied Cornelius, becoming hot suddenly; "but mark me, Pretorius Brandt, I will have a recompense from Poot Kinkers, who uttered it first. Yet a mouldy earthworm such as he—the brainless digger and

delver of onion beds—is of no account ; neither he nor his whole Guild of Gardeners, and if the honourable College of Tailors cannot——”

“ But the news, Mynheer Vondel,” cried Pretorius, interrupting him. “ Tell us that.”

“ Ay, the news,” replied Cornelius, skipping to a desk, where he sat cross-legged. “ ’Tis no less than our marching anon into Brabant, and seizing the city of Hertogenbosch, or Bois le Duc, as others call the place, to sack the houses, drive out the inhabitants, destroy the stores laid up there by the Spaniards ; to close the gates against them, and thereby pluck their main support from under them. Then there will be the triumphant return to Antwerp, and if the ‘ Silent Men ’ do not cease their endless speeches, the ‘ Peacemakers ’ refrain from blows and blood-letting, to say nothing of Poot Kinkers and his——”

We did not let him finish his excited talk, but interrupted it to be told more of the project for seizing the city of Bois le Duc.

“ It hath been decided upon to entrust the expedition to Count Hohenlo,” went on Cornelius, “ a brave young man who came to words with the burgo-master over the business ; a handsome, long-haired, quick-tempered young man, moreover, dressed more fashionably than most, and at this present

indebted to me for a cloth frock lined with satin of cypress, and a pair of round slops, which——”

“The expedition,” interrupted Pretorius again. “When does it set out?”

“So soon as it is ready,” answered Cornelius. “They are collecting the force at this very moment, horse and foot, and I am to be entrusted with the charge of a banner under Captain Kleerhagen of Brussels. What, think ye, will Poot Kinkers say to that?”

He jumped off the desk as he said this, and just then Mynheer Brandt came into the *comptoir*, from whom we heard that the Captain Kleerhagen spoken of by Cornelius was to set out that night with fifty men for Bois le Duc, Count Hohenlo and his whole force following him later, to lie in ambush before the Antwerp gate of the city.

From Teligny’s company a dozen or more had been selected to accompany Captain Kleerhagen, and of these were Pretorius and myself. There was only the shortest time for our preparations, and in a few hours after hearing the news we set out on our way to Bois le Duc, which lies a goodly distance from Antwerp.

It was a blusterous, dark night, and through it we marched silently, coming at length to the river Deeze, upon the banks of which is the city, a pros-

perous place, that Cornelius Vondel vaunted highly, because of its manufactories of cloth. He was marching beside Pretorius, but without the banner he had said he would carry, whilst ever and again he boasted of the deeds of valour he was destined to perform.

A halt was called when we came before the draw-bridge, between which and the portcullis were two small guard-houses, and into these we climbed upon finding them empty. There was not a sound to denote that our presence was suspected, and here we lay for the night, glad of the shelter from the cold air and icy wind. Pretorius and I were in the guard-house that is upon the left hand of the drawbridge, and Vondel, having gone into the one that stood on the right, was seen no more by us for some long time. What Captain Kleerhagen's plan was I know not, but Count Hohenlo's force would be nigh at hand before daybreak, and perhaps Bois le Duc was to be attacked then.

Morning broke mistily, and as a clock within the city chimed eight, we ensconced in the guard-house saw a small company of soldiers draw up the portcullis and lower the bridge. There were about ten or maybe a dozen of them, who, all unconscious of our presence, stood gossiping idly beneath the portcullis. It was a moment never to be forgotten



when, with a feeling such as I cannot describe, I waited for the signal to leap with my companions from our hiding-place. Captain Kleerhagen was crouched at the half-open door, his hand raised as if to enjoin silence, and through the opening I could see the city guard chatting, guessing nothing of the fate which was so speedily to fall on them. The word was given in a whisper ; there was a sudden rush from the two houses, and the next instant the guard was at our mercy—there were a few cries of alarm and pain, and then every one of those who a moment before had been lusty in strength and spirit lay slain. The gate was seized ; the shrill note of a trumpet rang out to summon Count Hohenlo's ambuscade ; and with a shout of victory we poured pell-mell into the town.

I recollect seeing amongst the dead a white-haired old man whose duty it was to attend to the ropes by which the portcullis was raised and held in its place. It was Cornelius Vondel who told me the wretched creature's name and the duty that he performed, as we passed beneath the gateway, leaving two of our company to guard it, and the thought of the old man bleeding and helpless soon went from my mind, by reason of the scenes that quickly followed, although this was a pitiable sight enough. He lay in a corner, holding still the useless

rope in his hand. Count Hohenlo, his armour glistening with dew, and his long curls floating in the wind, with his horsemen thundering after him, two hundred strong, came at a headlong gallop past us.

The citizens fled before him, none of them offering any resistance, and the work of sacking the houses began. There were things done in the first moments of the attack upon the defenceless people, which I recollect now only as one remembers a horrible dream, for the Antwerpens seemed mad with fury and eager for plunder, and though there was but a small number of them compared with that of the citizens, for only a few of Count Hohenlo's men were with him, beside the fifty under the command of Captain Kleeerhagen, yet the sight of us seemed to have robbed the inhabitants of Bois le Duc of courage, the sacking of their houses going on merrily. There was no attempt by our officers to maintain control over the troops, and every man did what seemed best to do for himself, as through the streets they dispersed, breaking open doors and windows of the dwellings which promised the richest prey, with the panic-stricken owners fleeing for their lives before the plunderers.

Pretorius and I had kept together, and the

thieving, for it was no less, being not to our liking, we turned in the direction of the gate, meaning to wait there until some one in authority might come, and as we went thither, Cornelius Vondel called to us from the window of a house that was one of the finest in the street.

“There are noble pickings within,” he bawled ; “and only a few patriots to carry off the valuables, so come up to me and share the spoil.”

He had something tucked under his arm, a little casket that contained jewels, may be, and on the ledge of the window he balanced a great bundle of goods that came tumbling down as he loosed his hold on it in his excitement. He raised a cry of lamentation as the bundle fell, and then the two soldiers who had been left to guard the gate, whose faces I recollect even now, came from the post of duty, fearing to lose the chances of sharing in the plunder. It was all a wild confusion around us ; cries of “Down with the Spaniards,” “Victory,” “Death to the foe,” resounding from a distance, mingled with shouting of another sort, that meant something very different from victory we were soon to discover.

As yet not an armed man, nor sign of one, had been encountered, and the Antwerpens had won Bois le Duc without a blow being struck other than the

slaughter of the guard. There was no garrison, such as might have been expected, and the city lay defenceless at the mercy of Count Hohenlo's soldiery. Only a few of these, some two hundred as I have said, had been brought with him, the rest remaining waiting for the order to enter the city, but none was sent them, and for an hour maybe the sacking of the houses continued. There were heaps of plunder in the streets, guarded by those who had rifled the goods, and were now perplexed as to the surest way of retaining their prize, fearful of being robbed themselves by their companions. Cornelius Vondel was one of these, for upon our refusing to enter the house whence he had called to us, he came hastily out from it, hugging the casket and vowing vengeance against the man who had snatched up the fallen bundle. I think if Cornelius had not feared to lose the casket he might have fought for the recovery of his other plunder, but he contented himself with hard words, and presently we left him. There was a louder noise than ever, and it was coming towards us—the sounds of clashing swords and trampling of horse hoofs, denoting that something more than the sacking of the houses was going forward.

Then a breathless little man, whom I remembered as an apothecary living in the Silberstrasse in Ant-

werp, came rushing upon us, his eyes nearly starting out of their sockets with fear. He, too, had done well in the sacking of the city, but as he ran, all that he had gained fell from him, and at his heels came Cornelius Vondel.

"Prythee, stay a moment," shouted Cornelius, and being longer in his stride than the other, had clutched the panting apothecary by the shoulder, who thereupon dropped the last of his prizes, a rich crystal goblet, that smashed into a thousand fragments on the stones. "What is this you are telling? Who are coming? What danger?"

"Forty thousand Burgundians," cried the apothecary, writhing to free himself from the grip of Cornelius on his doublet. "Fifty thousand lancers of Italy—hark! They are even now at blows with Count Hohenlo's handful of men! Listen to the swords and cannon!"

There were no cannons to hear, but so terrified was the little man that perhaps he believed them to be firing; and his forty thousand were but two score of Burgundians and the like number of Italian lancers, that had come the day before our attack on Bois le Duc into the city, to escort a train of merchandise thither. These had sallied out, upon the alarm being given, and meeting some of the Antwerpens had slaughtered them. Then some

of the more valiant citizens had joined with the escort, falling upon Count Hohenlo's men, pursuing them as they fled, the battle waging fiercely in the narrow streets, and though the defenders of Bois le Duc were but a handful compared with their enemies they were the victors, being a compact body, whilst the latter were scattered in disorder, and bent only upon plundering. Moreover, Count Hohenlo had been surprised, having been told that there was no garrison in Bois le Duc, and believing himself deceived by Captain Kleerhagen was furiously enraged against him. His soldiers had dispersed, and were unable to be rallied, a panic setting in, during which a great number of the Antwerpens were killed. But Bois le Duc was too rich a prize to be lightly abandoned, and with the intent of re-entering the city with the remaining portion of his men, then lying without the wall, Count Hohenlo came galloping down the street for the purpose of bringing them back with him.

All these things I heard afterwards, for they were common talk in Antwerp later on, and for the time, when Pretorius and I, together with the Silberstrasse apothecary and Cornelius Vondel, stood together in the street of Bois le Duc, there was nothing but a wild confusion around us. The States troops had turned their backs to the enemy, being

vigorously assailed in their bewilderment, and were flying helter-skelter to the gate after Count Hohenlo. Some few escaped through it, amongst whom we gained the drawbridge and safety, but ere a score had passed beneath the portcullis, the ponderous ironwork fell, shutting off the way whereby those who remained in the city could have escaped—there were more than a hundred of these—and barring the entrance against Count Hohenlo's re-entry with a thousand of his men, eager to retrieve the fortunes of the day.

I saw the thing done, and that by the trembling hand of the old man whom I had passed earlier in the morning, when he lay for dead amid the slaughtered guard at the gate. He had crawled from the dark corner in which he had hidden himself, maybe, to breathe his last unheeded and alone, and with a knife severed the ropes by which the portcullis was held in its place after being raised. Pretorius and I had just emerged from beneath this, and pausing in our flight I saw the feeble old man, all bedabbled with blood as he was, raise himself erect, and clinging to the rope, cut fiercely at it. There was no time to stay his hand nor warn those who were behind us, for the next moment the massive ironwork had fallen, crushing beneath its ponderous weight two men of Captain Kleerhagen's



company into a hideous mass of mangled flesh, and as it fell the gallant old keeper sank lifeless, having performed an act which preserved Bois le Duc and its citizens from plunder and death more effectually than any armed host would have done. The last drop of his blood had been shed in the deed, for he lay motionless with the severed rope fallen from his nerveless hand, but Count Hohenlo would bring his men in vain against the city now. As in a trap those who had been left behind were caught, and for the most part killed by the enraged citizens and the escort of Burgundians and Lancers. Some were cut to pieces in the streets, and others who had climbed the wall were drowned in the moat in attempting to escape. Others, yet only a few, were more fortunate than their fellows, for seeing that escape through the gateway was hopeless, they had ascended to the tower of a church hard by the city wall, and from it Captain Kleerhagen, all accoutred as he was in his harness, leaped into the water, being preserved by a miracle, for how else had he gained the solid ground upon the further side of the moat?

Of all those who had entered Bois le Duc, only a score or so escaped from it. We could hear the destruction of the others, and I caught one glimpse of what was going forward behind the portcullis. Count Hohenlo, with more than a thousand men

at his back, was raging at the impediment which prevented him from returning into the city, for he had no means of breaking down the portcullis, and thwarted and defeated, the Count gave the command for the troops to retire, whereupon we began a straggling march homeward to Antwerp.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE BLOCKHOUSE

**I**T was Poot Kinkers who spread abroad the story of Cornelius Vondel's exploits at Bois le Duc, for he boasted of doing so, and if either of them had been brave enough they would have fought over the matter. It was Poot Kinkers who described to us the story of Cornelius' crestfallen return to Antwerp, although both Pretorius and I could have told it more truthfully than did Poot, for it pleased him to add a great deal to it that was not the case, saying that the miserable tailor had come home with a hang-dog look in his eyes, and, in a word, Poot held his ancient enemy up to ridicule.

It was a fortnight after the disastrous events I have just narrated, that it was decided for an expedition to cross the river and make an attack upon the Borcht blockhouse. We of Teligny's company were to take part in the engagement, together with other troops. Poot Kinkers had joined himself to a regiment under a certain Captain Helmess, and

Cornelius Vondel was enrolled in another, having separated himself from Captain Kleerhagen, calling his former commander a traitor and poltroon. Both Poot and Cornelius declared themselves to be eager to meet the foe, but the gardener looked fitter for his work of digging than fighting, in his clumsy ill-fitting iron cap and rusty plates. We saw a good deal of him and Cornelius at the deserted, idle *comptoir*, and their enmity increased until a sort of truce was arranged between them in view of the forthcoming attack on the blockhouse, Poot declaring that he would never die at enmity with a neighbour.

Then the evening came which might be the last for a good many of us, and we were a sad little company in Mynheer Brandt's house. I sat watching Anna's troubled face, thinking of her loneliness when Pretorius should be gone, Mynheer Brandt, who was at the further end of the room, being more silent than usual.

Captain Teligny had ordered us to assemble early next morning, and we were to carry food for our use in the expedition. I remember how Anna had busied herself in preparing this for us, and when everything was done how we sat together in the long low-pitched room, talking in subdued voices as the evening shadows gathered.

She was sitting beside her brother, and we could hear the stir in the streets and hum of voices that came through the open lattice, when the quiet of the room was disturbed by some one who came noisily into it, and looking round I saw Gerard Dickers.

Truth to tell I had forgotten him, for he had not come to Mynheer Brandt's house after our little encounter in the street, but now that he had interrupted the last evening Anna might ever spend with her brother, her resentment was plainly to be seen, although she tried to hide it.

"One would suppose a great calamity had fallen on you all," he began sneeringly, for neither of us had greeted him. "I hear that you and this Englishman are turned soldiers," he added, addressing Pretorius.

"The time has come for that," replied Pretorius. "The old and sick in the city have to be protected, and maybe you yourself, Mynheer Dickers, will need to be saved from the Spaniards," and he said this in a way that was not to be misunderstood.

I noticed the angry look which came into Dickers' eyes, but he gave a jeering answer.

"I am able to protect myself," he replied. "One can do that without joining with the rabble and scum of the city. There are other ways of dealing

with one's foes, be they within or without the walls, than coming to blows with them."

"Maybe you would follow the example set by the Marquis of Roubaix," said Pretorius, naming an infamous renegade who had traitorously betrayed his countrymen and joined the Duke of Parma against them, and Dickens laughed scornfully.

"Have no fear of that," he answered, "for there is not a citizen of Antwerp more loyal than I. Yours is but a sorry jest, Pretorius, and were you any one else I might be affronted by it. How say you, Mistress Anna?"

"I know nothing of what you speak," she answered, rising from her chair and going towards the door. I saw the look which he gave her, and the fierce anger which possessed him, as Anna passed out of the room, and then he began asking some questions of Pretorius which I paid little heed to. He took no notice of me, except by a sneering glance once or twice, and after a while he went to Mynheer Brandt, who had remained at the other end of the room intent on some papers which he was reading.

Presently Anna returned to the room, whereupon Dickens looked up, watching her, as she stood with her hand on her brother's shoulder, and then he came to us again. She had taken from the sachel

which hung at her waist a little package and handed it to me.

“ ’Tis something by which you may remember us,” she said simply.

Dickers’ face was black as night, and he made a gesture as if to snatch the package from me, but she had stepped between us.

“ Does remembrance need a gift,” he said, with a sneer.

“ Nay,” she answered, and there was a curious sound in her clear voice, “ but a gift may preserve remembrance,” and she spoke truly, for her present saved me from death later on.

Dickers turned on his heel, and I thanked Anna for the little gift, but awkwardly, by reason of my being confused somewhat. Gerard stayed at the door for a moment, muttering a threat that I would have resented had it been uttered elsewhere, and then we were alone again.

The evening meal had been served, and for the last time, perchance, we four sat at the table, the thought of the parting which to-morrow would bring keeping us silent ; and supper being ended Anna bade us good-night. Mynheer Brandt had some business to transact, and, left alone, Pretorius and I began speaking of the little scene which had happened.

“We have made a deadly enemy of Gerard Dickens this evening,” he said. “He will never forgive nor forget Anna’s scorning of him, and if the chance came for his taking his revenge, he would not hesitate.”

“I do not fear the worst he might do,” I answered lightly, and then we fell to speaking upon other topics, which were in everybody’s mouth at the time.

We were astir by daylight, and from the rendezvous where the different companies were gathered who would take part in the expedition we were marched to the river bank, where lay the boats and barges in which we should cross to the opposite side, the Borcht blockhouse being some three miles or less distant. Teligny’s company was the first to embark, and this we did in a more orderly fashion than the rest, for there was great confusion, and as Pretorius and I sat in the bow of the boat waiting for the order to cast off from the shore, we watched another company scrambling afloat at a little distance. I saw Cornelius Vondel among them waving his snaphaunce (which is a firing piece used by “snaphans,” as the poultry stealers in the Netherlands are called) and heard him quarrelling loudly with some one in the struggling crowd of armed men, but I doubt if I should have paid any attention to that, unless I had seen the round face of Poot



Kinkers, who stood neck-deep in the river, vowing vengeance upon Cornelius and shouting for help, raving something about the Dean of the "Peacemakers" having thrown him overboard, which was true, I think, for Cornelius was capering on the edge of the barge, shaking his clenched hand at the drowning Poot.

"I would have it known that I am as brave as any man," cried Cornelius, "and care not for all the gardeners in Antwerp. If you drown in your clothes, Poot Kinkers, we shall have some peace, perchance, but I would that you had paid me before you perished for the doublet I made the last Easter-tide."

The water was gurgling about Poot Kinkers' ears by this time, and splashing into his mouth as he tried to answer, so I stretched out an oar, which he grasped, and by good Providence got him into our boat. There was too much noise and bustle for his mishap to be noticed, and having stood upright a while so that the water might escape from beneath his dented old breastplate, he sat himself down beside a sour-faced Brabant man, whose name I had learnt was Johan Schim, and who spoke not a word, for all that Poot Kinkers' elbow-piece had emptied itself of a good quart of Scheldt water in Johan's lap, but he gave Poot a grim look.

“Your troubles have soon begun, Mynheer Kinkers,” said Pretorius laughingly. “You were like to be drowned, I think.”

“I was like to be man-slain,” cried Poot, holding first one leg in the air and then the other for the water to run out of his boot tops. “And Cornelius Vondel shall hear more of it when I return home.”

“You will have something worse to groan over than a damp skin before you see Antwerp again,” said the Brabant man, eyeing him sideways. “Dost know what happens when one is caught by the Spaniards?”

“Not I!” replied Poot, shivering. “Neither do I care to know, with the ague creeping over me as I feel it now. But as for your Spaniards, I mind them not, for they shall be driven out of the country ere long. Think you I have been Dean of the Gardeners’ Guild a year, and one of the ‘Silent Men’ nineteen months come the feast of Saint Michael, and have not learnt the art of fighting?”

Then Johan Schim, the Brabant, leant forward, working his great bony fingers like as if they were Flushing crabs, and Poot drew from him a little. “They slit your nose, and slice your ears off; they lop legs and arms an you were a hedge to be trimmed, and what remains of your body is left to get home

as best it may," said Johan very solemnly. "For I have seen these things done and worse."

"Even that does not daunt me," exclaimed Poot abruptly, yet beginning to shiver again, "and come what may, that noisy, ill-conditioned, threadpaper man, Cornelius Vondel yonder, shall pay dearly for his misuse of me."

He held out his hand as he said this, pointing to the barge in which the Dean of the tailors was seated, and as it came alongside of us, he and Cornelius were snarling at one another again, until the boats drew apart, and began to move slowly, for the tide ran strongly, in the direction of the opposite side of the Scheldt, where in due time we landed without further mishap.

The expedition numbered some five hundred men, and we mustered beneath the shelter of the river bank, which was high at this part. The first company of the attackers carried scaling ladders, and next to this we of Teligny's regiment marched. I saw no more of Cornelius Vondel nor Poot Kinkers, and in grim silence preparations were being made for the move upon the blockhouse, which stood black and menacing in the distance, with the flag of Spain floating in the keen breeze, and as we came near to it the muzzles of cannons could be seen—two tiers of them, thrusting through the

loop-holed side of the blockhouse ; and as I looked, a cloud of smoke poured out with a report like a thunderclap, and a cannon shot came crashing into the foremost ranks of the scaling party.

Then the order was given to advance to the attack, and we ran forward.

## CHAPTER VII

### IN DEADLY PERIL

THE smoke was so thick, every cannon facing us having been discharged as we came up, that I could see but little of what was happening around me, but I knew that many of our company had fallen, over whose bodies the rest of us rushed to the attack. I could hear the brave Teligny's voice above the horrible din of the cannonade, and in a shorter time than I can describe the scene, we were beneath the straight black wall of the block-house, and so safe from the murderous fire. Then the scaling ladders had been placed, and the attackers were mounting the walls, the ladders creaking and bending under the weight of men.

The first to reach the top speedily came tumbling back, bringing many of their companions with them in their fall, but those below pressed upward bravely, and despite opposition had gained a hold upon the sills of the loop-holes, fighting point to point with

the Spaniards. It was fierce desperate work, and more lives were lost in those few moments during which the struggle to gain an entrance continued than at our first attack; and then some of our men had forced a way into the blockhouse, the sound of mad fighting within urging those of us who were below to follow them.

And then, although I know not how, I had got myself to one of the loop-holes, grasping the smoking muzzle of a cannon to aid me, as I clung there for a moment, seeing through the narrow opening the sight of men fighting for their lives. There was no quarter given nor mercy shown, but as wild beasts would have fought the Spaniards and Netherlanders struggled for victory in the confined space wherein the gunners had plied their murderous cannon. All this I saw, as upon my hands and knees I crawled through, and came headlong amongst the hurly-burly. Of what followed that I have no distinct recollection, nor how long the savage combat lasted, yet I knew that we had driven the Spanish from the casemate, and gained the interior of the blockhouse, which was hot and stifling by reason of the smoke which filled the place, where in a confusion which deafened and blinded me well-nigh, we fought on amid cries of furious rage and agony as some stout fighter fell to be trodden under foot.

I had seen nothing of Pretorius, nor the others of whom I have spoken, since we mounted the ladders, but as I cleared myself for an instant from the press of the fight I saw our commander Teligny, whose face was all bloodied, leap down a stairway which gave access to the chamber above us, and his voice rang out high above the din.

"The blockhouse has been fired," he shouted. "The flames will reach the gunpowder magazine ere many moments have gone. Save yourselves whilst there is time."

The smoke was curling thicker and thicker around us, and his words stayed the fighting as nothing else could have done, for although men may be brave enough when swords are clashing, it is another thing to be blown to death; and friends and foes together, in a mad attempt to escape from the burning building, we got ourselves helter-skelter to the room below, which was the lowest part of the blockhouse and level with the ground. A lantern that hung from the low ceiling cast a sickly light, and but for this the place would have been pitch dark, not having any windows in it. The stout door through which entrance was gained had been barred and bolted against the attack, and the thick bands of iron which crossed it defied our efforts to unloose them. And there, in the gloomy light, expecting each moment

would bring death to us, we remained penned like sheep, hearing above us the tumult of the fighting which had begun again, as the doomed men struggled to escape, the thick clouds of hot smoke curling over our heads and hiding from sight the stairway by which we had descended, the hissing and crackling of the dry woodwork adding to the horror of our situation.

Then out from the choking smoke burst Johan Schim, his face fiercer than a wolf's as it passed by me in the beams of the lantern light, and hurling right and left of him all who stood in his path he seized one of the iron bands, tearing the staple which held it with a mighty wrench clear from the doorpost ; and using the bar as a lever, he prised the other bands apart, the door flying open as he did this, and we sprang out, heeding naught of either Spaniards nor Netherlanders at the moment, as we ran hither and thither to escape the dreaded explosion.

I cast a look behind me as I gained a little distance, seeing the flames and smoke spurting out from the burning blockhouse, where even yet the fierce conflict raged in the uppermost floor. Against the wall hung one of the scaling ladders, held there by nails which had been driven into the timbers of the building, and climbing up this was Poot Kinkers, who had gained midway, trailing his snaphaunce behind



him. It was too late to warn him of his danger, too late to save him from the peril which he did not perceive, for there came at that instant a roar as of thunder, and a blinding stream of flame—the great blockhouse rocked and trembled, its walls rending apart with a horrible noise, and high into the air were cast the doomed wretches who had remained with them—there was a great crash of splintering woodwork, and the fortification fell to the ground in ruins amid the fire and smoke that hid the dead. For a moment it seemed as if my senses had left me, nor was it until some one seized me by the arm that I came back to them. It was Pretorius, and I looked up at him in a sort of wonder, as we stood there, regarding the awful spectacle in silence.

Around us lay the fragments of the blockhouse, the great timbers which had been cast down burning and amongst them were dead and dying men, a heap of these being at a little distance from the spot where we were standing. The fighting was over, and the garrison, or at least those of them able to move, had withdrawn beyond the ruins, retreating along the river bank in the direction of the village of Kalloo, which was the headquarters of the Duke of Parma, and as yet no fresh enemies were in sight. There was a dull quiet, too, over the scene, whilst here and there little parties of those

who had formed the expedition were gathering, our commander Teligny attempting to restore some kind of order, and as we made our way towards him, a deep groan came from behind a heap of smoking woodwork, causing us to stop. Lying there on his broad back was Poot Kinkers, staring up into the sky, and at first I thought him to be dead, but his blinking eyes and deep groans proved that he was yet alive. He gave us a look as we bent over him, and presently his lips moved.

“I am about to depart out of life,” he said very dismally, “and would forgive my enemies, if there are any left alive. I wish that Vrow Kinkers were here, but I leave her a good trade—if you get to Antwerp, good friends, bid her thin out the onion beds which are in the garden next the burying ground of St. Gregory’s Church, and pay that stony-hearted taxgatherer Gilderstrieker ten crowns, although I had a mind to dispute his charges.” And when he had said this, Poot Kinkers closed one eye, keeping the other on the body of a dead Spaniard which sprawled over a broken plank near by.

We promised to do as he wished, and having given another groan, he became so still and silent that I thought him dead, when suddenly some one staggered up to us with his hair tangled over his eyes, and came to a stand, regarding the prostrate form of Poot

Kinkers intently. It was Cornelius Vondel, and Poot's open eye recognized him.

"I am on the verge of death, Cornelius," he said slowly, "having been hurled to this spot as though I flew with wings. Moreover, I am lying with the point of a nail sticking into my back, and therefore it is no moment to bear enmity against any man. I forgive thee all thine hard words, and especially for casting me into the Scheldt," at which Cornelius was like to have wept, I think. "Furthermore, Vrow Kinkers will pay you for the tawny-coloured cotton velvet jerkin you made me at the christening of young Poot, so that you do not overcharge me after I am dead. And so farewell."

What Cornelius would have answered I cannot say, for as Poot Kinkers said this there arose a shout, and I started to my feet, to see coming in the distance a company of Spanish soldiers, and that our retreat to the boats had been cut off. The boats and barges in which we had crossed the river had been seized, and to remain beside the ruined block-house would mean our capture by the enemy. Johan Schim joined us at this instant, as we stood round Poot Kinkers, who paid no heed to the alarm which had been raised.

"Help me to lift him," cried Cornelius in a broken voice, "for I would not have even his

dead body left to the mercies of the heathenish Spaniards."

"There is time for us to escape," replied Johan sulkily, "and live men are more to be thought of than this carcase"; but he stooped down, and putting his great arms around Poot's body, he swung him over his shoulder as easily as one might lift a child. Then we hastened away, down the slope of the bank which hid us from the view of the approaching soldiers, who were a good distance off as yet, and made our way to where some trees grew thickly.

There was no order in our escaping, and what the others did we neither knew nor thought of. The trees were about half a mile distant, and to these we hurried, reaching them at last, spent and breathless, Johan Schim laying his burden down roughly on the ground.

Safely sheltered from discovery, we recovered ourselves of the fatigue that we had undergone, and for the first time since starting found opportunity to eat and drink the provisions we had carried. There was not one of us but had a wound or smarting hurt, yet the rest and refreshment served to restore our strength, and at the worst our injuries were nothing serious. True, Cornelius had a sword thrust in his arm, but he had bound the wound skilfully and done the like for Pretorius, whose shoulder had been

cut. Of my own hurts or Johan's I need not say anything, and only Poot Kinkers, whom we had forgotten, I think, whilst we ate and drank, had come to harm, but presently Cornelius Vondel began to speak about burying the poor fellow.

"It will be sad tidings for Vrow Kinkers to hear," said Cornelius, after tilting his head back to empty the wine flask which he had taken from Poot's wallet; "but the news might be worse, for to tell truth Kinkers was overmuch given to wine and the neglect of his affairs. I doubt me whether the vrow will not fare better without him," and he turned the flask upside down ruefully.

"I have carried Poot Kinkers far enough for my liking," replied Johan, "but I will lend a hand at his burial; yet how we are to make a grave I know not."

"The saints be praised that he is quiet at last," went on Cornelius. "Yet it will be a sad thing to put his body underground. Maybe he brought some money with him, so verily I will see what his wallet contains. Alack, poor Poot, thou art of a truth a silent man now."

"There you lie, Cornelius Vondel," and as the words came, Poot Kinkers rose to his feet, stretching himself as when one awakens, and he came to where we sat, his round eyes gleaming with fury.

“So I am overmuch given to wine and the neglecting of my affairs, thou miserable tailor,” he exclaimed, making for Cornelius, but Pretorius stayed him by thrusting out his foot, over which Poot stumbled, “and the vrow will be better without me.”

“Good Poot, we thought you to be dead,” cried Cornelius, who was the only one of us able to speak because of our laughter. “And thou hast forgiven me an hour ago for every wrong done you.”

“Nay, I take back my forgivenesses,” roared Poot. “’Twas only when I thought myself to be at the door of death that I forgave thee, and now that I am alive once more, hale and lusty, and thirstier than a cucumber at this present, I will have recompense for your casting of me into the water, to say nothing of the hard words used to me at divers times. Give me my wine flask that had a pint of good Rhenish in it.”

“That has gone,” I said, willing to appease him. “Take mine, good Poot. We thought never to hear your voice again, and are right glad we were mistaken.”

“For a man who has been blown into the air,” growled Johan, “you are most marvellous merry, Poot Kinkers. I might have left you where you fell, it seems to my thinking.”

“You were but a rough steed, Johan,” replied

Poot, when he had taken his lips from the flask, sighing comfortably. "But I thank you for your help. I am now myself again, having had a most refreshing sleep. Truly my bones ache somewhat, but that is so oft-times when a man goes to battle," and with this Poot fell to upon the victuals that remained, eating hungrily.

"Where are the rest of us?" he asked with his mouth full. "Those who crossed the river this morning?" And we told him what had happened, and the danger that beset us, for to get back to the city was impossible yet awhile, if indeed we ever did.

"Do you know in what part of the land we are?" asked Pretorius.

"Truly," replied Poot, "for I know every ell of the road betwixt here and the village of Sacheim, which should be in view but is not, and midway between Sacheim and the Scheldt dwells a saintly grand-aunt of mine, or did twenty years ago. She was married to a cheese-maker of Gouda, who died in his own dairy of the Black Death in 1537," and he got to his feet, shielding his eyes from the rays of the setting sun as he looked across the flat meadowland where stretched the Borght dyke.

He was for starting at once for his relatives' house, but we decided to remain hidden where we were until night set in, so we lay down again beneath the

trees, Poot Kinkers being the most cheerful of the party.

It was moonlight before we moved away, Poot Kinkers pointing to the faint marks on the meadow, telling us this was a footpath, but the night mists that were stealing over the country hid the village of Sacheim from our view.

“There should be a light yonder,” he said, when we had walked a mile or two. “For I remember me well that a candle was set in the window last time I came hither. ’Tis twenty years ago, but I recollect that worthy grand-aunt of mine right well, and if she hath not gone to Heaven, we shall have a welcome and a plentiful supper anon at her house.”

“There is a light to the left,” said Pretorius, “and something more like a path than I have seen yet leading to it. Is that the house, think you, Poot?”

“There was a parti-coloured cow at graze last time I came here,” replied Poot slowly, as if considering his words, “but I see nothing of it now, though maybe the mist hides it.”

“There is only the flicker of the light,” said Johan shivering, for the night air was very keen; “and though I begin to think your grand-aunt and her house have vanished together, I will make shift to find out what manner of place it be yonder.” So through the long grass we turned aside from the path,



coming suddenly, as it were, into a poultry yard' and crossing this to where, on the doorpost of a dismal-looking old house, hung a lighted lantern, but both within and without the dwelling reigned an ominous silence.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE FLOOD

“**O**PEN the door, Poot Kinkers,” said Cornelius in a hoarse whisper from behind Johan Schim’s back, where he was hiding himself. “One would think you feared the sight of your grand-aunt.”

“There is no woman, nor man either, who could make me afraid,” answered Poot, stooping down with his eye at the latch hole, “but I mislike the silence. Maybe this is not the house I came to twenty years ago, for I remember something being reported that my grandmother’s sister had died of a surfeit, and if that be not true she is too old by this time to entertain guests. Put twenty to eighty, and she will be a hundred years of age, and therefore somewhat hard of hearing. I see nothing save a black darkness within,” and he skipped backward against Cornelius, standing with his hand to his ear listening. “I would advise that we enter the house in a body, so that the poor soul may not be too much surprised at seeing us.”

Johan, who was growling under his breath, wasted no more time in delay, for with a vigorous kick he burst open the door and we went in, Poot bringing up the rear on tiptoe. Pretorius carried the lantern, which he had unhooked from the doorpost, and I glanced round to see a comfortably furnished room, that was a very welcome change from the clinging mist and chill air outside. Upon the hearth smouldered some live embers, but further than this there was no sign that the house was inhabited.

“This is somebody else’s house,” said Poot in a whisper. “I was never here before, and if so be that——”

“You were too certain about your ancient kinswoman,” and Cornelius, who was foraging already in a corner closet, interrupted him. “You always speak before you are sure of anything, yet the house suits me most excellent well, and the more because of the store of food I have found.”

“And a fine to-do there will be when the owner of it comes home,” retorted Poot. “I am sure of that at least, whatever I may be of other things. But who could resist the sight of yonder meat pasty? Out with it, Cornelius Vondel, for I am famished almost.”

We had the food and wine on the table the next moment, and already the fire was beginning to

crackle and blaze merrily, Pretorius having heaped some faggots on the embers. The light of the lantern sufficed to eat by, and this we did as only hungry people can, so that presently Poot Kinkers and Cornelius Vondel became like old friends, chattering and laughing as if nothing had ever happened to arouse an enmity between them, and we were in the midst of a hearty laugh when suddenly Cornelius dropped the last fragment of the pasty, which was within an inch of his mouth, starting to his feet, crying "Hark" in a voice of terror.

"Cast a glance from the window, Poot Kinkers," he said, making a grasp at the piece of pasty. "For there is the sound of footsteps, and the clink of a sword on the stones."

I ran to the little casement, drawing aside the red curtain which hung before it, and as the fire-light shone out it showed me a band of armed men, who were crossing the poultry yard. It needed not a second glance to discover them to be Spanish soldiers, and dropping the curtain, I stepped back to my companions, who had risen from the table.

"Spaniards, say you?" exclaimed Poot, whose knees were shaking. "Then our fate is sealed, for your ravenous greediness hath not left them a morsel of food, Cornelius Vondel."

Cornelius was too alarmed to give any reply,

and the next moment Johan had extinguished the light. Then we were mounting a ladder that led to a loft, and at that instant the door was thrown open below and a band of soldiers came tramping in. I heard them stumbling over the bench at which we had sat at supper, and a rough voice was exclaiming something angrily ; there was the clatter of arms being cast down, and after that a muttering of talk.

“ Pray Heaven they be not over-hungry,” whispered Poot to me, as we lay amongst some hay which littered the loft.

“ Hold thy peace, Kinkers,” whispered Cornelius, from somewhere in the pitch blackness, “ or we shall be discovered ” ; and at this there was no more talking, whilst we waited for whatever might be about to happen to us. It would have been folly had we offered any resistance to the soldiers, as they outnumbered us double, and our only hope of escaping capture or worse was the chance of their quitting the house. We had closed the heavy trap door, that covered the opening, so that the sounds in the room below were heard indistinctly only, but such as were proved that the soldiers intended to remain for the night, and presently a deep silence came.

I had fallen asleep, being exceedingly weary, but a touch on my shoulder aroused me, and I sat up. It was Pretorius who had awakened me, and by this

time the moonbeams were shedding a faint light into the loft through an opening in the roof.

“Listen,” he said; “what is that strange sound?”

Although the room below was as quiet as before, there was the sound as though some movement was being made there; as if the door of the house were being tried, yet very softly, the sound dying away and then coming again gently, and we sat listening to it without disturbing our companions, but Johan stirred uneasily on his couch of hay. Then it seemed as if a hand were tapping at the door, a dread such as I cannot describe creeping over me, and going to the opening in the roof I glanced out to behold a sight which for a moment made me believe I was dreaming. Far and near beneath the silvery moonlight stretched a rippling sea, covering the meadows we had crossed and hiding every vestige of the land. It was the sound of water we had heard lapping against the walls and door of the house, and as Pretorius and I stood gazing, Johan came to us.

“The Borgh dyke has been cut,” he said, “and unless we can escape from the house we shall be drowned, I fear.”

Poot Kinkers was wide awake now, asking the meaning of our being at the opening, and Cornelius Vondel, rubbing his sleepy eyes, which had the moonlight full on them, sat shivering on a heap of hay.

A few words explained the situation to them, and as we spoke the water rose higher and higher until it was almost level with the tops of some bushes which made a blot on its smooth surface hard by where the poultry yard had been. Then there came an alarm from the soldiers, whom until that moment we had forgotten, and Poot began capering about in a kind of glee.

“They will be like unto Pharaoh and his host who perished in the Red Sea,” he cried. “Hark, they are mounting the ladder. Sit on the loft door, Cornelius, so that they cannot come up to us,” and with this he planted his stout body on the trap, calling to us to join him.

There were fierce cries and shouts from the imprisoned soldiers, and we felt them pushing at the trap door which resisted all their efforts to lift it, the murmur of the rising water increasing, and already the house was flooded to the ceiling of the room almost, whilst the angry shouts of the Spaniards changed to entreaties for help. They had discovered our being in the loft, but Johan thrust a stout bar of wood through the staples which were on either side the frame of the opening, and so holding the trap securely, for, try as they might, the men below could not force it up.

But our fate was likely to be no better than theirs,

seeing that if the flood deepened we should be drowned, and maybe our hearts relented, for after considering a while, we decided upon letting the soldiers ascend to us. Yet we only did this after they had handed up their weapons to Johan, who threw them into a corner of the loft where it was too dark for their being seen, and when this had been done the miserable half-drowned Spaniards came tumbling through the opening.

I am not likely to ever forget that night, for every moment of it seemed to increase our danger. The water was not a foot from the window in the roof, whilst now and again the house trembled as though ready to fall, whereat Poot Kinkers and Cornelius Vondel groaned and bewailed, and the Spaniards invoked every saint in the calendar they could recollect.

By slow degrees the dawn came at last, however, showing us the tops of trees and roofs of houses here and there in the distance; drowned cattle and poultry swirling by and implements of husbandry, but no help was to be seen. There was only water around us on every side, and Pretorius came from the opening, giving me a rueful look.

“We are in a deadlier strait than ever men were before,” he said, “for there is no sign of our getting away until the waters subside.”



“Say you so, Pretorius Brandt,” exclaimed Poot with a whimper. “Then I might have been killed outright at the blockhouse, and so saved the trouble of dying of hunger here.”

“Be of good heart, Master Kinkers,” said Cornelius. “Maybe help will come to us, for I remember at the bursting of the dyke at Williamsdarm that a cat lived through the inundation, and was none the worse for being a week without food, save that its coat hung loosely.”

“Maybe,” retorted Poot with a sneer, “but I am neither a cat nor a tailor, to live on nothing for a week. And as this house seemeth to me to be in danger of falling, I shall get me to the roof, and sit holding by the ridge of it, so that if anything that will float me away should come near I can escape.”

With this Poot Kinkers scrambled out of the opening, and on the roof, where we heard him groaning heavily.

“Poot’s idea is not so foolish as might be thought,” whispered Pretorius to me, “and we shall do well to follow him. Perchance a boat may drift within reach, and if so, we shall be able to get away.”

Johan agreed with him, and so we got ourselves one after the other to the roof, where we sat in a row, holding by the wooden ridge of it. As for the soldiers below in the loft, I cannot say what was

happening to them, for they had kept apart from us, sullen and silent, muttering now and then one to the other, and we paid no heed to them, as we held to the ridge pole, watching the waters eddying round the house.

The flood was lapping against the bottom edge of the opening, but it rose no higher, luckily for the imprisoned Spaniards ; but the house, which had resisted bravely against the rush of water, presently began rocking. Not with any great movement, but in a gentle way swaying to and fro, as if it were preparing for its sinking beneath the surface of the flood. None of us spoke, nor was there anything to talk of, but our gaze watched eagerly for the chance of something drifting within our reach that might enable us to escape the threatened fall of the house.

Presently Cornelius uttered a little cry of gladness, as he stretched himself up cautiously.

“ There is a great piece of timber floating nearer,” he said. “ It will sustain the weight of one of us in the least,” and he cunningly placed himself before Poot Kinkers, who was clinging to the chimney top with a close embrace.

I know not which of us it might have been who would have gone floating away on the piece of timber, for as it drifted nearer and nearer a sudden swirl of the water carried it past the house, and





ONCE A BOAT WHICH WOULD HAVE HELD US ALL WAS NO FURTHER  
THAN A FEW FEET FROM THE HOUSE.

Cornelius gave a deep sigh of regret. Then a hen-coop came bobbing along almost within our touch, yet that too turned aside and went by, and after this we were disappointed again and again in laying hold of the different things that the flood brought with it. Once a boat which would have held us all was no farther than a few feet from the house, and our hope of reaching this was at the highest, when it suddenly sank, whereupon Poot Kinkers set up a howl of despair which brought one of the Spaniards to the opening in the roof, who stared up at us most dolefully.

It was midday, and since daylight we had sat like a row of storks on the ridge of the roof, the most melancholy company ever seen, gazing across the watery waste until the glare from it almost blinded us. Far away was a strip of land which Johan Schim told me was the island of Kalloo, where as I have already said the Duke of Parma was encamped, but except for this, only the tops of the tallest trees and a church steeple were to be seen. There would be no subsiding of the waters, so that we might escape from our perilous position, and the house was beginning to crumble beneath us. One corner of the walls had gone already, and as if the Spaniards in the loft had discovered the danger that surrounded them, they were clamouring loudly.

One of them had seated himself on the sill of the opening, to whom Johan spoke in Spanish, and so the time wore on heavily until one of the walls fell with a soft splash, leaving the roof trembling as if it hung on springs. There was a cry from those in the loft and a struggle to escape, in which the Spaniard who had spoken with Johan was cast into the flood, and being weighted with his armour we saw no more of him. What would happen next was plainly to be foretold, and it was at this moment that the great door of some ruined barn came with a heavy thud against the roof.

In an instant Johan Schim's hand was grasping one of the broken hinges, holding the heavy door with a strength that was more than any man's I had ever known ; and as the Spaniards came climbing upon the trembling roof that bent beneath their weight, Poot Kinkers had reached the furthestmost edge of the door, whilst Pretorius steadied it on the other. Then Cornelius and I were upon it, and lastly Johan, who sprang beside me, giving such a sturdy thrust off, that the door was a dozen yards from the house in a moment, twisting and rocking as the flood bore us away. There was a loud shout from the Spaniards, to which we paid no heed ; nor could we, indeed, and before long we were a mile or more from the doomed men, drifting towards the island

of Kalloo, which seemed to rise from the surface of the water clearer every instant, so that presently the tents upon it were to be seen distinctly.

And it was upon a shelving meadow of the island that the great door floated at last. We had been saved from drowning truly, but our perils were not ended yet, for as we stepped upon dry land some soldiers who had been watching our approach bid us follow them, and closely guarded we were conducted to a tent where sat a Spanish officer, who, after hearing Poot Kinkers' confused story, ordered us all to prison.

## CHAPTER IX

### A WONDERFUL PROJECT

THE place wherein we were confined was the little church of Kalloo, into which we were thrust, and kept hungry and thirsty until the evening, when some food was brought us. What our fate would be we could only guess at, but Johan Schim prophesied that it would be death at the least, and a speedy one, moreover.

“I remember me what happened after the taking of the fort of St. Mary,” he said, whilst Poot Kinkers sat watching him in the waning light, giving a shudder now and again. “There were not a dozen left alive of the garrison, and those so shrunk with starvation that they walked like skeletons. John Pettin, their commander and as brave a man as ever fought, was taken bound into the Duke’s tent—this same Duke of Parma, mark you; and in the tent with him was the Marquis of Roubaix, whom ye may have heard of as the most traitorous enemy this country has had.”



"Ay, I have heard of the Marquis of Roubaix," groaned Poot. "A great man he, and crueller than the Spaniards themselves," and he cast a piteous look at Johan, whose face was sourer than ever.

"Being brought before the Duke," he continued, "and questioned, although that was a waste of time and breath, it seems to me, Roubaix suddenly thrust him through so that the brave Pettin fell dead. 'Too much eagerness, my good Marquis,' quoth the Duke, laughing as he looked at the dead man, and these are the enemies we are amongst."

Nobody answered Johan, and Cornelius Vondel, who sat beneath the picture of St. Anthony which hung on the vestry wall, gave a hollow groan.

"Maybe you are thinking we may escape," went on Johan, grinning in the half-light, "but you may as well think of flying. We are all dead men, or as near dead as can be without being stark and cold, so rest you easy, and be comforted in remembering none of us will ever go fighting again."

"Alack, that I was over-persuaded to quit my home," whimpered Poot. "For I have been blown into the air, slandered, brought almost to a watery end, and preserved for being run through the body."

"Like many a better man," said Johan, and then he spoke no more, but curling himself up like a hedgehog went to sleep, the light growing dimmer

and dimmer, until the glare of a lantern at the grated window came suddenly. The lantern was held by a soldier who passed some coarse food in to us and said something which I did not understand.

In the morning we were conducted to a tent where some officers sat at a table, and after being questioned there was a consultation between the officers, during which we waited to hear the sentence that would end our suspense. That we should be executed I had no doubt, and the memories of those whom I should never see again seemed to make me almost forget the fate awaiting me. Then one of the officers spoke in a whisper to the soldier who was foremost of our guards, and we were marched from the tent, Pretorius and I being taken one way, and the others in another, so that we saw no more of them.

We did not return to the church, but were ordered to another part of the island, passing through the camp down to the river, and for the first time I saw the preparations which were being made for bridging the Scheldt. I had heard of them, as every one in Antwerp had done, but like the rest of those who spoke of the Duke of Parma's great project, I had only laughed at it. For at this part the river is nearly three thousand feet wide and sixty deep, the water flowing rapidly, and in winter time with a great force carrying everything before it, so that

to bridge the river seemed to be impossible. Yet if it were done, the fall of Antwerp would be almost a certain thing, for should the Spanish gain possession of the pasture land which lies opposite Kalloo on the other side of the Scheldt, between the Kowenstyn dyke and Antwerp, they would have the city at their mercy.

Already had been gathered vast stores upon the bank of the river, near by the port of St. Mary, which stronghold had fallen into the hands of the Spanish after a long and gallant resistance by John Pettin and the garrison under him, and the spot to which Pretorius and I were conducted seemed like some great dockyard ; workmen of all sorts, smiths, masons, carpenters and other trades, together with some of the soldiery, being busily employed, and with these Pretorius and I were set to work.

Being unskilled, our labours were to help lift and carry heavy timbers and other things, and to perform various menial offices which were sometimes dangerous ones also, and this we did under the watchful eyes of the officers in whose charge we were placed, and from early morning until night we were kept toiling without pay or reward. We received no ill-usage, however, and except that we worked to help in the overthrow of the city, there was little cause for our complaining. Day by day the great scaffold-

ing of the bridge crept further and further into the rushing river, being so strongly built that the current was powerless to harm it.

The design was to build from either side of the river for about a hundred yards and to connect the end of each part of the structure by a bridge of boats. The work was already approaching a successful issue, the great flat-bottomed boats upon which a platform would be laid, so that troops and cannon might cross, lying ready to be placed into position; and to guard the shore ends of the bridge rafts were moored above and below it, built with pointed sides like the teeth of a saw, so that anything which might float up or down the river would be caught on them. There was a strong tower on each shore to defend the approaches, and guns had been placed in positions to defend it if an attack upon the bridge were attempted. The names of the forts were St. Mary and Fort Philip, the former being on the Kalloo side of the river, and it was on this portion of the bridge that Pretorius and I were employed.

We had seen nothing of our companions from the time of our being taken prisoners, and what had happened to them we knew not. They might have been shot or hanged for aught we were aware, and it was a pleasant surprise when, as Pretorius and I were aiding in the fixing of a great timber, that I

saw, peering down at us through a forest of scaffolding, the round face of Poot Kinkers.

There was too much noise for me to hear his voice, though I saw his lips moving and his head wagging, so that I guessed he was speaking ; but when the time came for quitting our labours for the day, he was marched back with us to the place wherein we slept, and we speedily heard all the news he had to impart.

“ This is a fine ending to going for a soldier,” he said, “ for I am no better than a galley slave. Moreover, every instant that I am at work on the bridge is like to be my last, by reason of the dizziness in my head that will be the cause of my falling presently. Yet am I in a better plight than the tailor Cornelius Vondel, for he is no manner of use except at the needle, and having through his clumsiness fallen from a great height was left for dead. And dead he would have been without the help I gave him, whereby he recovered himself so far as to ramble in his speech, of devising a way by which he could escape from the Spaniards. He is now exceeding weak and left alone for awhile.”

“ Why should we not escape ? ” demanded Pretorius, rousing himself wearily, for all that day he had been troubled with a fainting sickness. “ I see no reason why we cannot make the attempt to get away.”

“I had rather stay here than risk the certain death we should suffer if we were caught in attempting to escape,” replied Poot. “The chance will come presently, maybe, but until it does I dare not risk my life. I have a growing-up family and must provide for them, understand. When the war is over I shall go back to Antwerp in peace, for a plain gardener will not be molested by the Spanish.”

I looked at Pretorius, thinking of the grief his long absence was causing Mynheer Brandt and Anna and a sudden resolution came into my mind. My companion was in no condition to essay the attempt of escaping from Kalleo at present, but if I were able to do so and reach Antwerp, I could at least relieve the anxiety of his father and sister. When this had been accomplished safely—and I did not doubt my success—I would return to Pretorius. Poot Kinkers was a kindly soul, and would do his best at nursing him during my absence, and the determination of putting my plan into execution was too strong to be resisted. I explained it, therefore, and although Poot Kinkers had a thousand objections and Pretorius a thousand fears for my life, I settled the matter that night by creeping through the little window of the hut, and going down to the river which flowed gurgling amongst the massive timbering of the bridge.

The night was pitch dark, the lanterns twinkling here and there being like stars amid the sleeping camp and upon the bridge. I could hear the dull tramp of a sentry's footsteps not far off from the place where I was standing, and I knew that the slightest noise I might make would arouse an alarm. A little boat lay moored near by, for I recollected seeing it as we left work that evening, and my plan was to get into this, and make my way, helped by the tide, in the direction of Antwerp. Maybe I could reach the opposite side of the river, and get afoot into the city, but I must trust to chance for that, and meantime all my thoughts were busy upon getting away.

I stood listening to the footsteps that passed and repassed the spot where the little boat was moored ; counting them in the hope of guessing the distance which the sentry walked to and fro, and at last I decided that this was somewhere about thirty yards. There were forty footsteps either way, for I could hear distinctly the man's turning upon his beat, so I reckoned that when I should have counted twenty footsteps, it would be the moment for me to go to the boat. There might be time enough for unmooring the chain by which it was held and pushing off into the stream before the sentry marched back, and though the risk of discovery was great,



I hesitated not a moment after the twenty footsteps had been counted.

I was kneeling on the soft ground, groping for the chain the next instant, or so it seemed to be, until I had found the links that were twisted round a stake. It was now that the danger of being discovered became greatest, for amid the silence the slightest clinking of the chain would sound loudly, as I cautiously unwound it. One by one the links were lifted which I held up in my left hand, busy with the other at moving the remaining part of the chain, and when this had been done, it seeming to occupy a long time, I remember, I heard the sentry turn and come towards me. He was not six yards from the spot where I crouched, holding the mooring chain in a heap against my breast, dreading that even my breathing would cause the links to rattle, and I knew that the moment which meant either death or safety had come at last. With a sudden wild leap I sprang into the boat, and as the sentry stopped in his walk, shouting something in his alarm at hearing my leap, I thrust off from the bank, the swift tide swirling the boat into mid-stream almost before I could recover my senses ; and as a warning shot flashed redly upon the black night, I was a hundred yards away from Kalloo, safely hidden by the blackness lying over the river.



What followed I know not, nor whether the alarm caused by the sentry's discharge of his firing-piece were of any importance. All I remember is feeling the boat speeding through the rapidly flowing water, and knowing that I was on the way to Antwerp, although reaching the city was no certain thing. Indeed, I think I should never have done this, for the boat leaked so badly that it was almost on the point of sinking, when by good fortune it ran aground on the bank opposite that whence I had escaped, and upon the left hand as I scrambled ashore rose the gloomy walls of a great fortress, which I know now was Fort Boerinne.

On either side of the bank stretched the black waters, and as the grey dawn came I could see the church tower of the village of Oosterweel, standing lonely above the inundated land. There were tree tops and some roofs to be seen, but I was too eager to reach Antwerp to notice the devastation of the country, and about midday I came at length to my journey's end, yet without succeeding in the purpose for which I had risked so much, and this for a reason neither Pretorius nor I had foreseen.

I had passed into the city, meaning to lose no time in getting to Mynheer Brandt's house, when I chanced to encounter one of the many visitors who had formerly come to the *Comptoir* there. He was

one of the "Silent Men," I think, but it matters not what he might have been, and he told me that Mynheer Brandt and his daughter were gone from the city, although they were to return thither in a day or two. I cannot well describe my disappointment upon learning this, and in a few words I explained to him how I had just escaped from Kalloo, and that Mynheer Brandt's son lay sick there.

"From Kalloo have you come?" he exclaimed. "Then I reckon you to be the welcomest visitor to Antwerp this day. Come with me to Signor Gianibelli."

Without permitting me time to question him the "Silent Man" hurried me away in the direction of the riverside, and here I saw some vessels at the quay, near which a tall, grey-bearded man was talking amid a group of workmen. The man was an Italian, a native of Mantua, Giuseppe Gianibelli by name, and I recollected then that he had the reputation of being one of the cleverest citizens in Antwerp. He was regarded as a wizard by the people, but be he what he might, Signor Gianibelli served them and their city better than those who talked more than he.

The "Silent Man" made a wordy speech in explaining my being brought to Signor Gianibelli's notice, who when the harangue ended took me aside.

“Tell me what you know concerning the bridge which the Duke of Parma is building,” he began; and I did so, saying that the bridge was nearly finished, in spite of all the difficulties of the great work.

“And now is the hour of my triumph drawing near,” he answered; “for Alexander Farnese, in his insolence, treated me scurvily when I would have given his master, King Philip of Spain, the help he needed. Now my help is on the side of the citizens of Antwerp, and if I do not destroy the bridge which the Duke has builded, may I be proclaimed as a charlatan. Come with me, and you shall see the preparations I have made for its destruction. What you have told me will be of the greatest usefulness, and there need be no longer any delay in putting my plans to the trial.”

And then Signor Gianibelli showed me the means by which Antwerp was to be delivered from the great danger that threatened it from the building of the Duke of Parma’s bridge over the Scheldt. The project was a wonderful one, in honest truth, and the devising of it proved Gianibelli to be one of the most ingenious men of his time, and one of the most patient, seeing the opposition he had met with from those in whose hands was the safeguarding of the city.

He took me aboard two vessels which had been grudgingly provided, he said, and to these he had given the names of the *Fortune* and the *Hope*, fashioning them in a manner which made them nothing less than floating volcanoes. Indeed this was the name by which Signor Gianibelli spoke of his ships, which were to be sent floating down the river until they fouled the bridge. Then the hidden fire within them would burst into flame, and an explosion, such as was never seen nor heard the like of yet, bring down the vaunted bridge and destroy it utterly.

In the hold of each vessel a floor of brick was laid, and upon this a vast quantity of gunpowder. Above were heavy stones, cannon balls, iron hooks, ploughshares and a mass of dangerous missiles of every sort, even the spaces between the mine and the sides of the ships being full of gunpowder. Over all was a light roofing of timber, and from the powder stored in the *Hope* a slow match was laid, whilst on board the *Fortune* was a piece of clock-work which at the proper moment would strike fire from a flint set amongst the powder sacks.

There was a great deal more to be seen and heard, but I need not describe this. Suffice it to say that the news I was able to give, coming as I did from Kalloo, decided Signor Gianibelli upon delivering his attack upon the bridge without further delay.

“Upon the bursting of these vessels,” said he quietly, “no living soul within a hundred yards of the bridge will escape death,” and then the thought of Pretorius, who would likely enough be at work amongst the timbering, changed all my plans. I must return to Kalloo as speedily as possible and warn him of his danger.

## CHAPTER X

### THE EXPLOSION

BESIDES Gianibelli's floating volcanoes, a fleet of fireships had been prepared for the attack upon the bridge, and these were lying ready to be sent down the river, eight at a time, followed by the *Fortune* and *Hope*. The fleet was to be under the command of an admiral named Jacob Jacobzoon, and I shall not easily forget Gianibelli's sneering laugh as he spoke of him.

"He is but another of the obstacles put in the way of my carrying out my plan," he told me. "First the council of Antwerp refused me the ships, and now they have entrusted them to the command of 'Runaway Jacob.' Never did a man earn a juster title than this, for one cannot forget his cowardice when St. Aldegonde essayed to hinder Alexander Farnese from reaching Kalloo. 'Runaway Jacob' might have turned defeat into victory, had he been other than the poltroon and knave that he is, yet in spite of all that my fireships and vol-

canoes are to be entrusted to him. The saints grant that he does not destroy his friends instead of Parma's bridge."

What I had been shown aboard Gianibelli's ships, and having heard his confidence in their power to destroy the Duke of Parma's great work, hastened my departure from Antwerp, and I set out on my return to Kalloo, woefully downcast at not having seen Mynheer Brandt, the thoughts of him and Anna making me almost forgetful of the danger of being caught, so soon as I reached Kalloo; but I was in a manner reckless now as to what might happen to me.

So I walked along the river bank, past the frowning walls of Fort Boerinne, until I came to where a great gap in the embankment barred my further progress along it. The opening was fifty yards wide, maybe, and the only way to reach the other end of it was by swimming. The water was icy cold as I waded into the muddy flood, and for an instant I regretted my not having begged a small boat from Signor Gianibelli, in which I could have gone down the river in the direction of Kalloo. Yet that I had not done this proved a lucky thing, for without doubt the boat would have been seen by some watcher on the bridge.

But I was still on the opposite side of the river

from the island, and as I came within sight of Port Philip, that stands on the Brabant shore, with the great bridge looming up against the darkening sky, I decided to cross the river by climbing through the maze of woodwork and over the bridge of boats.

And this by the greatest good fortune I did without being observed, reaching Kalloo and passing amid the timbers in safety. Then I was at the little hut, finding Pretorius and Poot Kinkers there, who would have shouted for joy at sight of me unless I had hindered them. Pretorius was himself again, and not wishing to daunt his spirit by telling him of his father's absence from Antwerp, I excused myself from answering his questions, as I described the plan of Signor Gianibelli, and the great danger we, who perchance might be employed upon the bridge, would be exposed to.

"Then come what will of it," exclaimed Poot, "I am determined to quit Kalloo forthwith. I know what it is to be blown like a feather into the air: the feeling of being turned into a broken-winged stork, and the sudden come down."

"It will be no easy matter for us to escape," I told him, "though I am ready to show you the way. But we may not be able to find a boat."

"What say you to making a raft?" he answered, but neither Pretorius nor I thought it possible to



do this with any chance of succeeding, and we went on talking aimlessly.

“There is Cornelius Vondel to be consulted. It would be an unkind thing to leave him here,” I said.

“That for Cornelius Vondel,” retorted Poot, snapping his fingers. “Let him look after himself. He is a quarrelsome man, and has made more mischief with his tongue than he will ever undo with his hands. But his wife is a pious meek woman ; therefore for her sake I will do what I can for her husband.”

So we arranged that Poot Kinkers should tell Vondel of our intention of escaping, and by the time we had settled upon this the night was well advanced. We agreed to hide ourselves amongst the maze of timbering in the lower part of the bridge when work for the day ended on the morrow, and then swim to the opposite bank of the river. It was the only method we could think of, and had less risk than by floating away upon a raft as Poot was inclined to urge, for we should have been a mark for every arquebus then.

Gianibelli had told me that the attack upon the bridge was to be delivered at latest in two days from the time when he showed me the *Fortune* and *Hope*, and already one day had elapsed. The great work which the Duke of Parma had devised was

completed at last, in spite of a thousand difficulties and obstacles, and in the Spanish camp on the island of Kalloo preparations were being made for the advance upon Antwerp. I recollect distinctly how the Duke with his principal officers came to view the finished bridge upon which the workmen were doing some trifling strengthening in the lower part, amongst whom were Pretorius, Poot Kinkers and myself. Cornelius Vondel, looking pale as a ghost by reason of his recent illness, sat astride a beam almost ready to fall through weakness, and over our heads we could hear the voices of those who were taking part in a religious ceremony held to make a pious ending of the work. It seemed as if nothing could injure the massive timbers, nor break through the line of moored boats whereon rested the platform which was solid, well nigh, as the very earth itself; and there was good reason for the Duke of Parma's exultation. Antwerp lay at his mercy now, and of what sort that mercy would be was known to every one. As I glanced upward, seeing the glitter of arms and armour, the waving of flags, and heard the triumphant *Te Deum* of the white-robed singers, the thought of what would follow the entry of the Spanish soldiery into Antwerp filled me with horror.

But alas for our plan of hiding amongst the timbers when the day's toil should be ended, for a

search was made in every part of the bridge, as if a suspicion of danger or treachery were in the Duke of Parma's mind. It may have been that a rumour of Gianibelli's design upon the bridge had reached his ears to warn him of the scheme, and though I only guessed this, I knew that he was too well acquainted with the Mantuan's genius for him to despise the plan at which the council of Antwerp had scoffed. So, because of the search, we were unable to secrete ourselves, being ordered to our lodging place along with the other labourers when the service ended which I have described.

The completion of the bridge was to be further celebrated with feasting and merry-making in the camp; and the usual guard over the prisoners, of whom there were many beside ourselves, took part in the rejoicings that evening, so that we were left unwatched in the little hut which we occupied, the door having been securely bolted upon us. It stood about a hundred yards from the river, and the only air given us came through one small window. We slept on the bare earth, and a more miserable place it would be impossible to imagine than that little hut on the island of Kalloo, where we had lived since being made prisoners.

It was a still, dark night, and the sounds of singing and laughter could be heard distinctly coming from

the soldiers carousing in the camp, and presently Poot Kinkers, who had been less talkative than usual, gave a deep groan.

"One might as well be dead as linger on in this wretchedness," he said very solemnly. "Every moment seems an hour."

"You have said that a dozen times before," I answered, "but this will be our last night on Kalloo. Have you warned Cornelius Vondel?"

"In a way," he replied. "I asked him if he meant to play the man for once and risk his lean body in trying to escape, or whether he intended to be a prisoner for the rest of his days. I gave a sort of caution against his sitting too long on the under-bridge in gathering courage for swimming, for there was a talk of some burning ships being sent against it, and of floating volcanoes. I did no more than hint at these things, for I am only half minded in saving that miserable tailor man. Still, for his wife's sake I——"

Pretorius interrupted him impatiently. "The time has come for testing your courage also, my Poot," he said; "for we must get to the bridge forthwith, and the door being locked, there is but the window by which we can go."

It was Pretorius who went first through the opening, and Poot essayed to follow him, but he being

somewhat stout of body and the space narrow, I doubt whether he would ever have got through without my help. Pretorius hauled him on the outside and I pushed from within the hut, Poot Kinkers groaning between us in his struggles. Then he had been got out, very like as though he were the cork from a wine bottle, and I was beside him and Pretorius the next moment.

All was silent, save for the sound of the merri-ment in the camp, as we made our way to the bridge, across the space lying between us and the river. On we went amid the litter of timber cumbering the ground, seeing the great mass of the bridge standing black and forbidding in the half darkness of the starry night, staying once to listen for some fancied footstep behind us. Then we had come to the bridge foot, creeping into the confused timbering of the lower part, until we reached the floating platform.

All had gone well with us so far, and there was a stillness that seemed more profound for the murmur of the water against the boats. The tide was running swiftly, and we waited, in expectation of being joined by Cornelius Vondel, before crossing the platform, meaning to swim ashore from the further end.

“Let him perish here,” exclaimed Poot hoarsely,

as he sat on the platform with his legs dangling. "If we wait longer we are like to do the same, and a tailor the less in Antwerp is no great matter. Maybe he doubted my talk of the fire-ships or is afraid of them—one cannot tell. I begin to doubt your volcanoes, Mynheer Rede, too."

"Look yonder then," I said; and as I spoke a sudden commotion on the bridge broke the silence. There was the heavy trampling of feet, and loud words of command, whilst from out the darkness sprang a great light, clearer and stronger every instant, until, blazing furiously, it sent out great beams of glaring flame, showing us the scene which was passing on shore. For Giuseppe Gianibelli's fire-ships were drifting down upon the bridge, where the Spaniards were hastily gathering, and at the water-side.

It was a spectacle such as I shall never forget as the fleet of fireships dropped down the swiftly flowing river. They had been dispatched quickly, one after the other, in spite of Gianibelli's order that only eight were sent off at a time, and the combined fires lit up the scene with awful splendour. The array of soldiers, their arms glittering in the lurid light; the little fleet wrapped in living fire, flitting as it were upon the glowing waters, guided by some unseen power; the death-like silence of ex-

pectation, all combined to impress the sight upon my memory.

Then the Spaniards began to take heart, for some of the fireships had grounded and been rendered useless for their purpose, whilst others had caught upon some obstruction in the river and were burning dimly, and to these the soldiers had put off in boats. One or two of the ships, moreover, had sunk in mid-stream, and Parma's troops greeted the defeat of the attack with derisive laughter.

But before these things happened Pretorius and I were upon the bank of the river opposite Kalloo, having gained this by crossing the platform. We risked the chance of being caught, although I think there was but small danger for us, in the face of the excitement occasioned by the approach of the fireships, and standing there we watched the failure of all Gianibelli's plans as it seemed to be.

Even Pretorius joined in the laugh aroused by the defeat, but he changed his tune suddenly when a little astern of the last fireship came two phantom-like vessels, swaying unsteadily on the tideway, upon the deck of each burning a smouldering fire.

"They are Gianibelli's volcanoes," I exclaimed. "Watch them well, Pretorius. I thank Heaven we have quitted the bridge."

The *Hope* had drifted a little ahead of her sister



ship, and then went staggering awkwardly ashore, the slow match burning itself out ineffectually, whereupon a company of soldiers instantly boarded her. We could see them extinguishing the little fire on the deck, and thrusting long poles down into her hold ; I, who knew the deadly cargo stored there, waiting in eager expectation of seeing men and ship hurled into the air. But all was dark on her deck now and a peal of mocking laughter rang out at this child's play of the besieged Antwerpers.

“So ends this wonderful expedition you told us of,” said Pretorius, turning to me ; “and now for getting away, or we may be caught yet.”

“Wait another moment,” I answered. “Look yonder,” and I pointed to where the *Fortune*, having torn her way through every obstacle, had struck heavily against the bridge on the side nearer to Kalloo, and a thin wreath of smoke was curling up from her deck. I saw the Duke of Parma and his chief officers leaning over the parapet of the bridge, glancing down at the ship they deemed so harmless, and a number of soldiers had leaped on board her. I saw all this, I say, and then it were as if the Duke had been forced to quit the bridge. Some one had urged him to go ashore, and it seemed as if he were loath to do so, although he went away at last.

And very happily for the Duke of Parma was it



that he quitted the bridge, for the clock-work within the hold of the *Fortune* amid the powder sacks was slowly but surely performing its task, and unconscious of the horrible fate awaiting them, the soldiers who had boarded the vessel went on with their labour heedlessly. The deck fire had been extinguished and the glowing embers cast overboard, whilst the officers, leaning in a crowd over the parapet of the bridge, watched them in high good humour and merriment. The dying flame light flickered here and there from the last of the fireships ; Gianibelli's plan, so carefully prepared, seemed to have come ignominiously to an end, and it was at the moment when I stood regarding the sight I have tried to describe, that a blinding flash of fire uprose from the *Fortune*, and we were hurled to the ground, as with a crash, mightier than thunder, the volcano exploded. It had been but the work of an instant to destroy the vaunted bridge ; the river yawned to its very depths, casting the water over the banks in great waves ; the earth trembled, and a crimson glare lit up the scene of death and destruction for a moment, to be followed by a dense darkness. The air was filled with falling missiles, and of all the men who a moment before had been on the ship or gathered on the bridge, not one remained alive. The soldier-servant of the Duke,

who carried a part of the armour Parma had relieved himself from, was killed at the side of his master ; the blockhouse at the bridge end with all the soldiers in it had disappeared, and of the bridge itself the greater part had been carried away, leaving a wide opening through which, had Runaway Jacob performed his duty, the fleet of vessels laden with provisions for starving Antwerp might have sailed triumphantly to the beleaguered city. He had been instructed to fire a rocket to announce the destruction of the bridge, he having followed the vol-canoes at a safe distance, yet for some cause, never to be known, the signal never rose.

There had been a deathlike stillness when the dull roar of the explosion had rolled away, and then cries of rage, agony, and dismay came from Kalloo. Bruised and confused I had staggered to my feet, and Pretorius was beside me as we hurried away from the water-washed spot. But Poot Kinkers had vanished, and with a feeling of mournful regret, my companion and I set our faces in the direction of Antwerp, going along the bank and leaving behind us the spectacle of destruction and slaughter.

Through the hours of night we walked on toilsomely, and it was getting light before we reached the gate of Antwerp, where we were questioned shrewdly as to our names and business, but at length we were

allowed to pass into the city, finding the citizens almost beside themselves with joy, for the news of the destruction of the bridge had become known. The bells were ringing from every steeple, and everybody appeared to have become friendly towards one another. No one heeded us, however, nor did we desire to be hindered, as assuredly we should have been were it known that Pretorius and I had witnessed the explosion of Gianibelli's volcano. We were desirous only of reaching Mynheer Brandt's house, and this we did in good time. But a silence hung over the dwelling, the *comptoir* door being closed and fast bolted ; no face appeared at the window of the room, in which we had sat during the evening before our starting on the expedition to the blockhouse at Borght, and a misgiving of some calamity having happened came into my heart.

## CHAPTER XI

### EVIL TIDINGS

“THIS is a strange thing,” exclaimed Pretorius, turning to me, “and I must know the cause for my father having left his house. There is no sign of any one living in it,” and then we went up to the door, finding it locked.

“We may be able to get in by way of the garden,” I said, and accordingly we pushed open the gate, that was luckily unbolted, and entered the long passage which led to the back of the house. As we went down this, the noise of our footsteps on the tiles seeming to raise an unusual clatter, a shrill voice saluted us from a little window which overlooked the passage, and the head of an old woman was thrust out.

“This is no place for idle folk to wander in,” she screamed, “and so begone, you pair of vagrants, or you shall be driven out.”

“It is old 'Lisbeth,” exclaimed Pretorius, “but what she is doing here in my father’s house I know

not. Do we look like vagrants ? ” he asked, lifting his face to hers, at which she gave a shrill scream.

Indeed we did, for our clothes were rent and stained, and I doubt whether any one would have recognized us easily. 'Lisbeth did not until Pretorius spoke to her, but she was glad enough then, and in a few moments we had been admitted into the house, which echoed dismally at our footfall.

“ Now tell us what has happened,” said Pretorius, glancing around at the familiar room, where we were seated. “ Why are you here alone ? ”

“ Alack ! ” cried the old woman, “ that I am the only one in this great lonely place, which, save for my grandson, who comes when he hath time from his duties at the tanyard of Mynheer Justin Hooglemiek, poor man, would be liker a tomb than a house, Mynheer Pretorius. And you must know that Jacob comes but seldom, for what with his practising with a firing piece, and his tanning, and his being for ever at the meeting of the citizens, and finally his having gone to the fort at Oodam, which is five miles away, no less, and maybe farther, he hath little time to comfort me with his company.”

The old woman spoke so rapidly that we could not easily stay her tongue, but when she stopped for breath Pretorius demanded to know the reason for the house being closed.

"Reason, d'ye ask?" cried 'Lisbeth, having got her breath again. "Why, that is soon told. You must know that there is a rumour in the city that we shall all be at the mercy of the Spaniards ere long; and those who could, have fled from the danger. Mynheer Brandt, your excellent father, might have stayed, perhaps, but he thought of Mistress Anna, so he and she have been gone these two weeks. There was a story that you and your companion there—" and she pointed her finger at me—"were dead, killed in the fighting at Borght, as I've heard, and Mynheer grieved bitterly. There was no life left in him, as you might say, and 'twas then that Mynheer Dickers came to his help."

I saw Pretorius start at the mention of Dickers' name and his face flushed.

"Go on," he said, for she had stopped to wipe her eyes now.

"It was Mynheer Dickers who brought the news of your being dead," went on the old woman, "and Mistress Anna wept as if her heart were broken. Moreover, he warned your good father that worse would befall him unless he escaped from Antwerp, as so many others had done. And Mynheer listened like a wise man, maybe, but more as a dead man might have heard, for his spirit seemed to have gone from him. So the end of the matter is, that he and

Mistress Anna quitted the city, going I know not whither, leaving me to keep watch and guard over the house as best I may, although I doubt me whether the ghosts and evil spirits that roam at night through the empty place will not drive me back to my one-roomed house in the Silberstrasse."

"Did they go alone?" I asked.

"Nay, Mynheer Dickers went with them," replied 'Lisbeth. "'Twas he who arranged their going, and settled everything. He was here every day until the morning of their departure, and Mynheer Brandt went out of the house leaning on his arm as if he were his son."

"Tell me where they have gone," exclaimed Pretorius, but 'Lisbeth threw up her hands at this.

"There was talk of their going into Brabant," she answered, "but I cannot say they went there for certain. Jacob told me Mynheer Brandt had spoken of escaping into France, yet I doubt that, for Jacob's word is never to be depended on. Then a servant of Mynheer Dickers', a prating, idle, pert thing, was pleased to say that her master had gone to Spain, so between them all I know not what to believe."

"We must find out where my father and sister have gone," said Pretorius, rising from his seat.

“Maybe the burgomaster can tell me, so let us get to the Guildhall without further delay.”

We stayed only to change our ragged clothes for fresh ones, and then made our way to the Guildhall. The news we had heard kept us silent for some time, and the misgiving that worse might be told made me eager to discover the place to which Mynheer Brandt and Anna had gone. I think the same thought was in my companion’s mind, although neither of us gave speech to it, and pushing through the throng we came at last to the Guildhall.

But the burgomaster, St. Aldegonde, was not there, so our journey was in vain, and Pretorius calling to mind a certain notary with whom Mynheer Brandt had dealings, we went to another part of the city, where we found the notary in his house, luckily. He was a dry, shrivelled old fellow, yellow-skinned and fretful, and from him we learnt that Mynheer Brandt had indeed gone to Spain, also that Mynheer Dickers had accompanied him. There was some further information we gained, such as to the manner in which Mynheer Brandt had made his money and goods secure, but neither Pretorius nor I paid much heed to that part of the notary’s talk.

“We must follow my father and sister,” said Pretorius as we quitted the notary’s house, and I promised to accompany him wherever he might go.



The thought that Dickers had beguiled Mynheer Brandt from Antwerp sufficed to arouse my fears, and although every one whom we met was gay and vastly contented, now that the bridge had been destroyed, we were in no mood to join in the general rejoicings.

It was midday before we thought of eating, although the food we had eaten in the little hut in Kalloo yesterday was the last we had tasted. Now, being hungry in spite of our troubled hearts, we entered a little house where food and drink were sold.

It was a long narrow room that we went into, the house being built upon the edge of a stream flowing past it into the river, and although the air was not cold, a fire was burning on the hearth, beside which sat a broad-shouldered man, whose back was to us. He turned as we came in, and his face was one of the merriest I had ever seen, for there was a jovial look in his eyes, and a laugh at the corners of his mouth, as it were, as he regarded us for a moment or two. He was dressed in a grey doublet of some rough material, and wore great boots such as I had seen worn by seamen, and yet for all that he had the look of a sailor I doubted whether he were one. One thing I noticed more particularly than either his look or clothes, and that was the strange conceit of

wearing on his broad brimmed hat a little wooden bowl, fastened to it by a string of tarred yarn. For the rest, he was big and brown-skinned; and spread out comfortably before the warmth of the fire he seemed to well nigh fill the hearth with his stout body. His age I guessed was about forty, and there was that about his appearance which convinced me at a glance that he was one of my own countrymen.

Having given us a look, the stranger took up a huge tankard which stood on the floor beside him, and emptying it at a draught, gave a sigh of satisfaction as he stretched himself until the chair creaked under him, and folding his hands appeared to resume the pleasant sleep from which our entrance had aroused him.

We seated ourselves at the end of the long table that stood beneath the window, and were eating the food brought by the server, when another customer entered the room; a fierce tall fellow, whose mustachios were twisted into sharp points curling upward a good three inches on either side his face. He was dressed as gallantly as ever Mynheer Dickers had been, and his rapier was full an ell's length, clattering noisily over the flagged floor. He wore a great hat of beaver, from which flowed a feather to his shoulder-point, and his manner was

as haughty as the look which he cast first on Pretorius and me, and lastly on the broad figure before the fire, at whom he scowled. Then unfastening his sword-belt, he laid the weapon on the table, saying loudly enough to be heard by us, "Heaven grant I may have no use for thee this day, my trusty blade," and at this I thought there was a little chuckling laugh from the man who sat before the fire, for the swashbuckler turned sharply, looking fiercer than before.

Calling for a measure of wine, the newcomer strode to the hearth, stirring the glowing logs with his foot until they blazed again, after which he stood astride betwixt the fire and the man who sat before it, who paid no heed to the rudeness.

"A fire is for all in a public room such as this, methinks," began the hectoring fellow. "One would suppose you owner of the warmth and comfort of the hearth."

"Ay, that might be thought," replied the other, in a round pleasant voice. "For to tell the honest truth, I am so ill acquainted with either that I am making the most of them."

"Whilst others may be cold," retorted the galling, twirling his mustachios.

"Even so," was the answer, uttered as meekly as a little child might have spoken. "Yet if you

were a roasting fillet of veal, you could be no warmer than at this present, my worthy fire-eater."

"Fire-eater, quotha," exclaimed the last comer, striding away as though he had been scorched. "I would have you know that I am not to be spoken to lightly, and a man has been run through like a spitted lark for less than this."

"Did I not say you were most monstrous warm," was the answer. "Done to a turn, my good master; done to a turn and needing only to be basted," and the speaker twisted round in his chair, leaning sideways, the better to enjoy a hearty laugh.

"This passes all patience," cried the other, "and though I am willing to think your drink hath been too strong for your head, I am minded to teach you manners."

"And I to learn them, so that they be better than mine own, that have served me indifferent well these two score years," laughed the merry fellow. "And foremost of them has been a sober peace toward all men. I am no quarreller, nor fighter, but the rather one who would assuage a dispute if it be possible. But look a little less like a jealous turkey, my friend, for I am apt to be overcome by a wry face, and fall away into a natural state of anger, which ill becomes me and my calling."

"I cannot abide this quietly," exclaimed the

gallant, stepping to the table and picking up his sword. "First I am called fillet of veal, and secondly likened to a turkey. Moreover you mentioned a basting. Unless you would know the meaning of the word you will depart the house forthwith," and he flourished his blade, making it sing as it clove the air.

The other, who was standing upright, carried no weapon, but as the bully lunged at him, he stepped aside, and sending out his fist he struck his assailant such a mighty blow that the fellow reeled and staggered backward, dropping his sword, which the brawny stranger immediately kicked into a far corner. There was a marvellous alteration in his face as he did this, for the merriment had all gone from it, and a grim look, such as your true fighter wears when the noise and hurly-burly of battle are at their highest, was in its stead. He stood firm as a rock, and resolute, waiting for the fallen man to pick himself up, but making no further onslaught on him, and when the other had got to his feet, holding his chin as though it were broken, there was a moment of silence.

"I will have your life for this insult and the injury done to my jaw bone," mumbled the fellow. "Get thee a sword, if so be you can use it, and defend yourself."

"*Peccavi*," quoth the other. "Did I not warn

thee of thy danger? Yet understand, I am no fighting man, nor one who would carry a dispute further than is right, for all that I have laid thee low. Let us reason together, brother, which by my certie is a safer thing than brawling. Yes, let us commune one with the other, regarding such things as hearths and swords, uprisings and downfallings. Didst hear me cry '*Peccavi*'? which, being interpreted, may be understood to mean that I own to having sinned in striking you so lustily, for a lighter blow would have vanquished you and your courage. Take yonder sword in your hand again and flourish it in some other man's face than mine, and if perchance you be asked why your cheek is swollen, answer that you have met the Reverend Miles Lambert."

Whether it was the speech itself, or the tone in which it was delivered, that daunted the quarrelsome gallant, I know not, but when he had picked up his sword, and replaced his plumed hat on his head, he drew to the doorway. There he vowed to be revenged for the insult he had received and vanished; but the other, who had spread himself again before the fire, paid no more heed to the words than if the wind had howled down the chimney.

Pretorius and I had watched the affair in silence,

but as the vapouring bully departed, I could not resist bursting into a laugh. And the stranger who had called himself the Reverend Miles Lambert turned round to us, all his good humour regained, and his honest brown visage wrinkled at eyes and lips with a smile.

“And what do two lissome lads in a tapster’s booth when there is business on hand ?” he asked. “Spaniards to fight and plunder to win.”

“Or a reverend man picking quarrels instead of preaching ?” retorted Pretorius, whereupon Miles Lambert rose from his seat, holding his big forefinger before his face, and smiling again.

“A fair question that,” he answered. “For reverend I am, or I might be something worse. Didst not hear me say I was a man of peace ?”

“I saw you strike a blow that might have felled an ox,” I said. “A strange sign of peace.”

“That may be,” he retorted, “but ’twas to ensure peace that I did what I did. For if I had been run through, what peace had I, except in my grave ? and that were a peace I am willing to wait for ; though this be a troublesome world and unquiet, yet I am content to stay in it.”

He was so round and jolly, that one could not resist laughing as he spoke. There was a strangeness, too, in his dress and manner that interested me, and that

he should call himself a reverend man caused me to wonder of what sort he might be.

“And so having answered you,” he continued, “let me hear what business brings you here ? ”

“To eat a quiet meal,” I answered ; “and after that we have no particular business.”

“Then fasten this in your hat,” he said, pointing to the little wooden bowl which I had noticed before.

“Beg, steal, or borrow, for in truth either way will serve, such arms as you can best use ; bid adieu to your friends, if so be that you have any ; buckle your belt a hole tighter, and sail with honest Captain Jonas Marck, as good a seaman, as stout a fighter, and as valiant as ought betwixt Brill and the river Thames, whose chaplain I am. And though the fare is meagre, and the wages are small, the cause is of the best, and, quietly” (here he held up his finger again, screwing one of his brown eyes close), “a better chance there is of gaining treasure than any I know of ashore. Your Spanish don bleeds gold and rich jewels—my certie ! I can vouch for that, and so think of it, my sons.”

“Who is Captain Jonas Marck ? ” asked Pretorius.

“Just a plain seaman,” replied the Reverend Miles Lambert, “engaged in the holy business of spoiling the Egyptians, as it might truly be called. Yet not for pelf, understand, although we do not



despise reward," and he laughed again; "neither for honour, that being the thing more barren of satisfaction than any I wot of. We are away to the coast of Spain directly, and having lost a man or two who were knocked on the head, Captain Marck has come to Antwerp to find others who will take their place."

"You are going to Spain?" cried Pretorius, springing to his feet. "Then whatever Captain Marck's business may be, I will join him."

"And I, too," I exclaimed, giving my hand into the jovial chaplain's big palm.

"Well said," he answered; "for never yet did two more likely lads wear the wooden bowl."

"And what may that mean?" I asked, and at this he leant back, laughing loudly.

"And hast thou not discovered our trade?" he answered. "One would have thought you would have guessed it ere now. For by this," and he touched the little bowl on his hat, "you might have known that we are the 'Beggars of the Sea.'"

## CHAPTER XII

### WE GO ABOARD THE "ANGEL"

AS the Reverend Miles Lambert said this, the door was flung open, and a man came into the room, dressed somewhat in the same fashion as the chaplain, and armed with sword and a pair of dags stuck through his belt. He was a dark-visaged fellow with black eyebrows that met across his hooked nose, giving him a fierce look, and although he was some inches shorter than the chaplain, he had greater breadth of shoulders, and his arms were longer than any one's I had ever seen before. Indeed, there was the appearance of such determination and strength in him, that I could not remove my gaze from his ruddy face, which was scarred from eye to mouth, giving token of his having been desperately wounded at some time. He, too, wore the wooden bowl in his hat, and his great hands were rough and discoloured like a common sailor's. His voice was harsh but not displeasing, having a certain gruff merriment in it.

“How now, *padre*?” he exclaimed. “What ails thee?”

“Naught ails me, worthy captain,” laughed the other, “but do not miscall me,” and he shook his head meaningly, whereupon the newcomer turned to Pretorius, giving him a searching look.

“Who are these?” he asked, and at this Lambert told him in a few words, how we had promised to join the company of which he was the chaplain, and Captain Jonas Marck the commander.

It was Captain Marck himself who stood eyeing us with Lambert at his side; a pair of the strangest figures I had ever seen. They were rough in manner and speech, yet possessing a grim good humour that seemed to rest so lightly on them, however, that it changed into a ferocious earnestness at a word. There was a recklessness, too, in their looks, that showed a familiarity with danger; and Captain Jonas, if the truth must be told, had an evil face. The chaplain’s denoted an easy-going disposition, and there was a fatherly sort of interest in his speech to us, which suited him well.

“So you are content to cast in your lot with my crew,” said the captain, after a moment of silence. “His reverence mayhap has told you our business.”

His reverence screwed up one eye, and it seemed to me that he winked, but his voice was solemn.

“Ay, truly so,” he replied, “and that there is hard work to be done and small reward to be gained for it. That is, unless Providence sends the recompense,” and he put his fat hands together piously.

“And that we pay no wages—didst say that, chaplain?” demanded the other.

“I care not for that,” replied Pretorius hastily. “You are going to Spain, this gentleman said, and that is sufficient.”

“He says many things,” answered Captain Marck, “and likely enough he spoke the truth. We go to the coast of Spain anon. My ship lies in the river, so if you have aught to do, let it be done without delay. I have lost time enough in Antwerp already.”

With this we went out into the street, Pretorius walking with Captain Marck, and I with the Reverend Miles Lambert, who answered my questions regarding the business on which Pretorius and I had entered.

“The Beggars of the Sea,” he told me, were Flemish refugees, who had united and fitted out a number of armed vessels, which cruised between Flanders and England, waging war against Spain, attacking and burning every Spanish ship they met; their daring and skill arousing the fear and fury of their enemies, who had complained to the Queen

of England that she had allowed these Flemish pirates the protection of her harbours, and assisted them in their plundering of the Spaniards.

“Which our lady Elizabeth, and may Heaven bless her,” went on the Reverend Miles Lambert, “was willing to do; yet she being at this present friendly with King Philip of Spain the order was given for the ‘Beggars’ to quit England. And so we put to sea, having neither stores nor powder, food nor water, for the Queen’s lieges were forbid from supplying us with provisions. It would have been like to bring war betwixt Spain and England, had her Grace favoured us, so we had orders to depart, and were left to our own devices in gaining the wherewithal to live. But I doubt me whether the king of Spain were wise,” and there was a merry twinkle in the chaplain’s eyes as he said this.

“Every ship in the company of the ‘Beggars of the Sea,’ carries its chaplain. Ay, and a Protestant chaplain, mark ye,” he went on, “of whom I am one for lack of being something else. Captain Marck’s ship is named the *Angel*, and she lies in the river for her stores to be put on board,” and he gave a deep sigh, as of regret.

By this time we had reached the river, where, moored a little distance off shore, lay a ship whose black hull presented a marked difference from the

vessels near her. These were gaudily painted on their upper works, some having gilding about them indeed, and broad stripes of colour above the water line ; but the *Angel* had none of such finery. A ragged flag, that fluttered from her main-mast head, bore the sign of a wooden bowl, and from her black side gaped the mouths of cannons—six of them—whilst others were on her quarter-deck.

A boat in which were two seamen was waiting for Captain Marck, and into this we got, being rowed off to the ship, and stepping aboard I glanced round me curiously. I recollected the appearance the *Vrouw Smits* had worn and the orderliness of everything aboard her, and therefore the deck of the *Angel* by its bareness and lack of many things caused me a great deal of surprise. The cannon carriages were roughly made, and where a wheel had gone its place was supplied by a piece of timber ; the tiller, which in every other vessel that I had ever seen was always ornamented with carving and gay with colour, was part of a spar that had done service for a top-mast aforetime, its splintered end scarcely hewn smooth ; and as I glanced aloft, I noticed that her shrouds and tackle were spliced and knotted in many places. Near the ladder, that had lost a step here and there and led to the quarter-deck, a seaman was patching a sail in a

clumsy fashion, and where a part of her bulwark had been damaged, the repairs had been done in a way that no shipwright would have owned to. A group of men was standing in the bows, and having given them some orders, Captain Marck went below, and the chaplain beckoned to the man, who, having finished mending the last of the ragged shot holes in the sail, was standing up stretching himself.

“Have Johan and Hans come back with the provisions?” asked the Reverend Miles, “for the food is needed sorely. Not an ounce of bread nor meat was left after last night’s supper,” he added, turning to us with a laugh, “and men must eat.”

“Hans came aboard empty-handed,” replied the man, “saying he could only get provisions by paying for them.

“Said he so,” answered the chaplain, nodding his head, “but did he ask what payment was wanted? Not money, I know, for there is none aboard, unless the captain has any. But we will wait for Johan’s return. He will not come empty-handed, I warrant me.”

The man went back to his place by the ladder, and the chaplain, who seemed vastly amused at the thought of payment being demanded for provisions, bade Pretorius and me follow him. This we did, going below through the lower deck, where

little was to be discerned in the dim light, and into the chaplain's cabin which was beneath the quarter-deck. There was a lantern burning in the cabin, and it showed a little space, scarce big enough for his Reverence's comfort, for it was a difficult matter for him to turn himself in it.

"You heard what was told me," he said, when he had seated himself on an upturned meat cask, "and that we are likely to go hungry to-day. The only things of which we have plenty are powder and shot. We never lack of them, for all our giving so much away," and he laughed.

"We have been in worst plight than this," he went on, "for upon our quitting Gravesend, where we thought to have laid a month, it was three days ere we fell in with provisions. Then we sighted a trader, and made short work of her, for hungry men are more eager than full men. She was from Cadiz, too, and so we performed a double duty in clearing her hold," and as he said this, he made as if he would cross himself, but stayed his hand midway across his broad chest, muttering that he had well-nigh forgotten his calling.

"How long will the *Angel* lie here?" asked Pretorius anxiously.

"Ask that of Captain Marck," he replied. "Yet I would the rather say, do not ask him. He hath



his own times and ways, and although he is in a manner tender-hearted, he is also in a manner somewhat quick-tempered. And for what reason doth it concern you or me when we shall set sail."

At this Pretorius explained how he and I had engaged in the attack upon the Borgh't blockhouse, and been captured by the Spaniards; of our having witnessed the destruction of the Duke of Parma's bridge, and how upon our returning to Antwerp it was to find that Mynheer Brandt and his daughter had left the city and were gone with Dickers to Spain.

"And it is to find them," said Pretorius, "that I joined your company. When you told me that Captain Marck was bound for Spain, I cared nothing but to seize the chance of going there with him."

"'Tis a filial duty, my son," replied the chaplain, "to follow your good parent, and preserve him from danger. Yes, we are bound for Spain, but many things may happen ere we reach there. Make your mind easy, therefore, and abide what trials Providence may send you, being patient under them. At this present there is a most plentiful lack of food amongst us, and like to be unless one bestirs himself to get it. Jonas Marck must be called into our counsels regarding this question."

He yawned as if weary, and gave a deep sigh that had a kind of merriment in it, and then Captain Marck came into the cabin, at whom the chaplain wagged his head.

“Hans has returned without bringing with him any of the provisions,” he said, “and that is worse than strange, for ’tis like to keep us a-hungered. What is to be done, my gallant Jonas?”

“You must go foraging, *padre*,” replied Captain Marck gruffly. “Who better than you can get the provisions we need. I meant to have sailed to-night, for there is the risk of our being kept in the river. The folks in Antwerp are mightily pleased at the bridge being destroyed, but he that is called ‘Runaway Jacob’ forgot to send up the signal by which the ships might have known that the way to Antwerp was open. The Duke of Parma will be here before them, and if——”

“All this is less than nothing compared with my own particular need for supper,” interrupted the chaplain, “and therefore I will e’en get me ashore again. I would like your company, my lad,” he added, turning to me, and I consented to go with him. Pretorius was too weary to go, so the Reverend Miles Lambert and I got into the boat, and were soon ashore, finding the citizens wonderfully altered from joy to dismay. For the provision ships

were still far away, and Antwerp no nearer succour than before the destruction of the bridge.

"We must proceed warily," said the chaplain, as we walked through a narrow street, "for I doubt me whether any of the traders in Antwerp will dance for joy when I ask them to send their goods off to the *Angel*, so it will be wise for me to take the sign of my calling from my hat," and then he proceeded to remove the little wooden bowl, winking at me the while.

Our first visit was to a butcher's booth, the sight of the scanty array of meat dispiriting my companion for a moment. Then he entered the house, calling for the master, who came to us presently.

"You have some most excellent meat, my friend," began the chaplain, "and I would like the whole of this which I see sent on board a ship now lying in the river, the *Angel* by name. "All of it, understand me."

"And who will pay for my goods," inquired the butcher suspiciously.

"His Excellency the Baron Jonas Hildebrand von Marck," replied the chaplain haughtily, "who is now on board his ship the *Angel*. What think ye, sirrah? Are these questions fit to be asked a customer. A word more, and I draw back my order."

He waved his hands so majestically and spoke with so much haughtiness that the butcher did nothing but bow and promise that the meat should be sent off forthwith, but it was some moments before the chaplain would be appeased. But he recovered his good humour as we walked back to the quay, with the shopman loaded with meat going before us to the boat.

“ ’Tis a bad thing to be in poverty,” he whispered, “ but a worse to let one’s fellow-creatures know it. Captain Marck will settle with this honest butcher, I hope, though it may not be with guilders. Yet when one is hungry—eh ? ” and he winked at me again.

We rowed off to the *Angel*, the chaplain going up the rope ladder at her side quickly, and I following him. Then the butcher and his meat were taken aboard, but what happened after that I can only guess at, for the Reverend Miles Lambert and I were in his cabin, whilst the captain got quit of the butcher. There was some high talking which we heard, and then all was silent, so how the matter ended I cannot say, but the chaplain told me that noble Jonas Marck was a just man, and I had no reason for gainsaying this.

And we had a good supper, thanks to the Reverend Miles Lambert, who said a grace, Captain Marck

fidgeting at the length of it, and after we had eaten we slept on some sailcloth that night.

The morning light showed me that the *Angel* was in a worse trim than I had noticed on coming on board her yesterday. The paint on her sides was weather-stained and blistered, although she was sound and watertight enough. Where she had been shot, the holes had been roughly stopped and caulked, the oakum sticking out raggedly, and from the number of these scars it was clearly to be seen that the *Angel* had been engaged in many a hot fight.

Of her crew some were Flemish, the rest being Englishmen, from one of whom I learnt that they had been at sea for a month or longer, and were to leave Antwerp immediately. A little later, therefore, the *Angel* hoisted her patched, ragged old sails, and glided down river seaward, unhindered by the Spaniards.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE FRENCH TRADER

**N**EITHER Pretorius nor I was set to any work, so we were on deck with the chaplain next day.

“The saints be praised that we have something to eat,” he said, “though I doubt me if it will last us long, for there are more men to work the ship than are needed, although not one too many to fight her, and that we soon have the chance of so doing is my fervent hope. For good reasons, too,” went on the chaplain, “seeing that we are likely to go a-hungered unless we fall in with an enemy. Once we are in blue water, Captain Marck will speedily find one and so replenish our stores. Maybe you are wondering why I am aboard with him? ’Twas that same hunger, or the fear of it, that made me join his company; one of the ordinances of the ‘Beggars of the Sea’ being that they have in each ship a Protestant chaplain to read them prayers, maintain a proper state of order, and so forth. Moreover,

no man who has done aught against the law is to be admitted into the service, and therefore much care has to be exercised in that matter."

The Reverend Miles Lambert smiled at me as he said this, and his stout body shook with laughter, although he spoke most seriously.

"But Captain Jonas Marck is not so curious as might be thought in the choosing of his men," he went on. "And he himself, alas! has a way of being somewhat bloodthirsty. So give no heed to what may happen, and take what fortune sends, as do I, who am no fighter nor greedy seeker after spoil, but a man of peace, bearing a holy office as you yourselves know," and he winked again, rolling off to the after part of the ship, as Captain Marck came towards us.

He watched the Reverend Miles, and there was a grim look on Captain Marck's face as he did so.

"His reverence hath been having a word with you, I see," he began. "He has a glib tongue, and it has served him well hitherto. Otherwise he would be roaming without either clothes to his back or a place to put his head in. Has he told you how he came to be chaplain aboard the *Angel*?"

"He said it was the fear of his being starved," I answered, and at this Captain Marck gave a hoarse laugh.

“Ay, he speaks the truth sometimes, and that was verily his state when I found him, wandering along the water side at Harwich, where I had put in,” he went on, “and when I made offer to take him aboard the *Angel*, he called on every saint in his calendar to reward me. Never a better man ever trod a plank than he, whether it be at drinking, or fighting or settling a dispute. Never a better friend is there than his reverence, nor a bitterer foe, Maybe he has been preaching to you?”

“He said no more than that he was a man of peace, and bore a holy office,” said Pretorius, “except, maybe, to give us some advice.”

“I know not what that might have been,” replied Captain Marck, “but it would be good advice. I’ll vow. There’s not a hedge parson in England half so wise as my chaplain, nor half so cunning. Neither any one so ready to turn his coat. He was an Austin Friar aforetime, and would have grown sleeker and stouter until he died in the odour of sanctity, as he calls it, in Canterbury, if he and the other friars had not been routed out of their nest and sent about their business. Some were hanged, being troublesome knaves, ’tis said, and some went begging through the country. The ‘padre,’ as I call my old gossip, Miles Lambert, was of no mind to be hanged, small blame to him, and being too stout of body for



much wandering about, he turned Protestant, and might have done well if he had found a patron, for he hath a ready tongue," and as he said this his reverence came back to us.

"How now, brother weathercock," roared Captain Marck, slapping him on the shoulder, at which the chaplain shook his head.

"The jest is ill-timed," he said solemnly, although his eyes twinkled merrily; "if indeed it be a jest, but weathercock or plain Miles Lambert matters not. I have been inquiring as to our stores, and unless we replenish them we are like to starve. Moreover, the other ships, the *Wolf* and the *Cherub*, should be in sight ere this, but naught is to be seen of them."

"Yet even that need not hinder you from providing a sermon, worthy brother," answered Captain Marck. "What else are you aboard for?"

"Avaunt with such idle talk," roared his reverence. "Sermons will not tighten one's belt, and can wait until better times. Moreover there is a vessel not so far off but what half an hour will bring us alongside her. She has the look of a trader, and may St. Anthony deliver her into your hands."

The news caused Captain Marck to bestir himself briskly, and the course of the *Angel* was set towards the distant ship, which could be seen lurching through

the tossing waters heavily. Every man aboard us was on deck, busy in preparing for an attack upon the stranger, whilst the chaplain, who had brought a pannikin of wine, sat astride a cannon and quaffed his drink merrily, as he encouraged one and then another of the crew to do their utmost in the cause of religion and freedom.

But the "Beggars of the Sea" needed none of their chaplain's exhortations, the prospect of revictualling the ship urging them sufficiently in their preparations for the approaching fight. Whether the stranger were a Spaniard or no mattered nothing, so long as she had provisions aboard her, and that was more to be hoped for than either gold or rich goods; so the Reverend Miles, sitting the black cannon as if it were a horse, gave over his pious speeches after a while, and emptied his pannikin without further delay.

Pretorius and I were ordered to help work a saker on the quarter-deck, and here Captain Marck paced to and fro, speaking now and again to some of his officers, and giving orders in a voice that could have been heard across the space separating the two ships. It was plain that the stranger was anxious to escape, for every sail had been hoisted, so that she was driving before the wind swiftly.



THE CHAPLAIN SAT ASTRIDE A CANNON AND QUAFFED HIS DRINK  
MERRILY.



But not so quickly as the *Angel*, and ere long we were within hailing distance, when Captain Marck, roaring from the quarter-deck rail, bid them surrender. The answer was a shot from the other vessel, which came bounding over the waters and struck the *Angel* in the forechains.

The chaplain meanwhile had quitted his perch on the cannon and was standing at Captain Marck's elbow, at the moment when we were struck, and he shook his head solemnly.

"Though I am a man of peace, and a chaplain moreover," he exclaimed, "it is lawful to do what one can to preserve their life," and he snatched a sword from one of the seamen, bidding him get himself a fresh weapon, and thrust it through his girdle.

Our course had been changed, and the *Angel* was headed towards the stranger, passing her astern, whilst as we did this every gun on our broadside was discharged; and when the thick smoke cleared, we saw that the other vessel's rudder had been shot away, and other damage done, so that she fell off the wind and lay floundering helplessly in the trough of the sea. The *Angel* was brought alongside skilfully, and as the two ships crashed together, our crew were clambering aboard the enemy, headed by Captain Marck and the chaplain, whose sword, flashing in

the sun, was clearing a path towards the spot where the fight promised to be fiercest.

But although it was brisk and bloody, it did not continue long, and within ten minutes of our boarding the vessel all resistance had ceased. Those who had been killed in the fight, friends and foes alike, were thrown overboard, and those who had been hurt dressed their wounds as best they might, whilst we who had escaped from death and injuries began searching the ship.

She proved to be a French trader, bound for Amsterdam, and was laden with a cargo that for all its value was of little service to us. There were wine and silk in plenty in her hold, and some of the casks were soon being stowed on the *Angel*, but the bales of merchandise was left untouched.

The French captain was standing ruefully at the stern of his vessel, which had been rent and splintered by the broadside, and with him were Captain Marck and the chaplain. I was near them, hearing the Reverend Miles Lambert consoling the unfortunate Frenchman for the loss he had sustained, and praising him for the gallant defence, as he called it, that had been made to save his ship from capture.

“Be thankful,” said the chaplain, “that you are

not a Spaniard, for in that case we should be bound by our duty to have spoiled you utterly."

"It seems to me that this has been done, Spaniard or no Spaniard," replied the Frenchman. "For you have shot away the rudder and rigging, killed six of my crew and taken my goods."

"It might have been a worse case with you," answered the chaplain, casting his eyes on the last of the wine casks, which was being carried to the *Angel*," and so comfort yourself with that thought. It may appear a hard matter, that we who are so many more and in better trim for fighting than you, have gained the victory, but consider how much harder it might have been. Captain Marck here——"

Captain Marck interrupted him with a growl.

"Cease this idle prattling, *padre*," he said, "or keep my name out of it," but the other took no heed of this.

"Therefore to end the business," he said, turning his eyes upward solemnly, "we will leave you to go on your voyage peaceably, now that the wine and such stores as may be wanted for our necessities have been safely got on board our vessel. Furthermore you have my hearty blessing, and may the saints preserve you from falling in with the *Wolf*, for the crew of that same ship are merciless men, and would assuredly have pillaged you."

He spoke thus very sedately, but his eyes were on the goodly stores we were carrying from the ship to the *Angel*, and then he went clambering over the shattered bulwark, leaving the Frenchman to get to Amsterdam without further hindrance.



## CHAPTER XIV

### IN BREDA

IT was some days later when, towards the close of the day, the *Angel*, which had been lurching through the heavy sea alongshore, was brought to anchor, and Captain Marck ordered a boat to be lowered, in which he was rowed to land. There were three or four men on the beach who seemed to be waiting for him, and as Pretorius and I stood watching the boat, the chaplain came to us.

“When is Captain Marck going to Spain?” asked Pretorius, a question which caused the Reverend Miles Lambert to give one of his strange looks at us, and was not answered for a moment or two.

“We have been at sea a long time now,” went on Pretorius, “and one would think we were never to see the coasts of Spain, much less ever land in that country.”

“And in that they would think rightly,” replied the chaplain, finding his tongue at last; “for this

business of Captain Marck's is too hazardous for anything to be certain of except battles and sudden deaths. Yet we are bound for Spain, but there is a rumour that a marvellous rich ship is likely to be in these waters anon, and Captain Marck has been on the look-out for her. She will be a prize worth striving after, and if the *Angel*——” and then he suddenly stopped, changing his talk, pointing to where an opening in the land showed the mouth of a narrow stream.

“There is a project to seize the city of Breda,” he said, hiding his lips with his hand as if he might be overheard, “which place is now in the possession of the Spanish. Captain Marck has gone ashore to consult with those who have the venture in hand, and belike it will lead to much. Wouldst like to join the company ? ”

There was so little chance of our getting to Spain, and the tedious sailing to and fro day after day was so wearisome, that the prospect of going ashore again made us the readier to give ear to the chaplain when he went on to explain the matter regarding the attempt to regain the city of Breda from the enemy, and the end of the conversation was that Pretorius and I promised to join the company which was to be sent ashore from the *Angel* on the morrow, for the purpose of driving out the garrison from the

castle fortress of Breda, and restore the city to its rightful owner, the Count of Nassau.

Captain Marck returned to the ship that night, and next morning Pretorius and I, with about thirty men of the crew of the *Angel*, went ashore, the chaplain giving us his blessing as we got into the boats, and the last I saw of him for a long time was as he stood at the rail of the quarter-deck waving his hand. Then we rowed straight for the beach, where a rough-looking fellow was awaiting us, who muttered a word or two to the foremost of our little company, and led the way inland, until the bank of a narrow stream was reached.

It was a dreary cold day, a biting wind sweeping over the swampy meadow to which we had come, and moored to the bank of the stream was a barge loaded with a cargo of black turf, which in that country is used for fuel. It was piled high on the deck of the vessel, and across a plank that lay from her to the shore we went aboard. There were two boatmen, who gave little heed to us, but at the door of the little cabin was a man whose voice and manner proved him to be some one of authority. His name was Gustav Fervet, and in a few words he made the nature of the venture clear to us.

And a more desperate venture than this upon which we were to take a part was never devised. It

meant certain and speedy death to us if it failed, for there could be no retreating from it. We were to gain an entrance into the castle fortress of Breda, and although it would be an impossible thing to do this openly, it might be accomplished by stratagem.

The barge carried peat on deck only, the space below being empty, and in this we, together with some thirty other men who were already aboard, making sixty in all, were to remain hidden until the moment came for our attack on the castle. Fuel was constantly needed there, and the barge had already made several journeys to and from the castle, so that she was never hindered nor challenged by the sentries upon entering the inner dock of the fortress, where she was accustomed to unload the fuel for the use of the officers and men of the garrison. I know not who had planned the venture, which seemed as little likely to be successful as anything could be, for we sixty would certainly be outnumbered, and once within the fortress escape was impossible. We were told that the journey thither would be only a short one, and after being given a few orders we went below.

It was almost dark there, and the space so cramped that there was hardly room to turn in once I had seated myself on the floor. We had brought no provisions, for the voyage was to be so short that food

and drink would not be needed, and when the last of us had found a resting-place, the covering of the hold was shut, making it black as night, and I felt the barge begin to slowly drift down the stream.

I think if we had foreseen what that journey down the river Merk, for this was the name of the stream, was to have been, we should have thought twice before promising the chaplain to join in the venture. For instead of being a few hours only, we were two days in the hold of the barge, stifled in the close air, famished with hunger and thirst, and half frozen by the water that oozed through the leaky floor. Sometimes the barge moved briskly, but only to come aground in the shallow stream, for the fierce wind drove the water ashore, leaving parts of the river well nigh dry. There was fierce grumbling in the hold, and threats to quit the barge and get ashore, but the leader of the company quelled the anger of the men at last. Breda was but a mile off, he told us, and we should have ample recompense for the discomforts of the voyage, and for an hour or two longer we sat or lay, longing for the moment when we might stretch our numbed limbs on land again.

Presently the barge, which had been bumping amid the mud banks, passed through the last sluice gates, and then the voice of some one who had come aboard was heard in the cabin speaking to the boat-

men. It was an officer from the fortress, who asked some questions concerning the cargo of fuel, which he said was sorely needed, and he had been ordered to examine it. Only a thin partition was between him and us, who were huddled in the hold, where every one had been sneezing and coughing for days, and I could hear the man who sat next to me well nigh choking to keep back a sneeze which might have ruined the whole plot, and although he did his best to hold silence, the sneeze came at last, whereupon every man of us prepared for discovery, waiting for the hatch to be thrown off, but the danger passed, and I heard the order being given for the peat to be hauled into the inner dock of the castle.

This was speedily done, and the work of unloading the barge began at once, for daylight was waning and the fuel required urgently. The labourers who had been employed to carry the peat to shore set to work with a will, and I heard one of them talking to the boatmen who had brought the barge to the castle.

“ ’Tis not so good as your last cargo,” said the fellow, “ and belike the governor of the fortress will complain of it.”

“ The best of the cargo is below,” answered the boatman. “ But it is too late to finish unloading to-day. I warrant you the governor shall have

enough of it to-morrow," and then they moved away, so that I heard no more of the talk.

It was a little later, and then Gustav Fervet, who was in command of the expedition, came down into the hold, bidding us be in readiness for landing, and although this might mean the death of every man who was aboard, it was the welcomest news ever heard. For we were so cramped and hungry, and so eager to be released from the foul prison in which we had been kept, that the prospect of getting out of it made us careless as to what might happen afterwards.

It was dark when we came out of the hold on to the deck, and except for some lights that shone from the windows of the castle overlooking the dock in which the barge lay moored, nothing was to be seen clearly. The cargo that had been taken from the deck stood heaped on the dock, and the only sound that broke the stillness was the measured tramp of a sentry, who was invisible.

Then, moving as quietly as was possible, we got ashore, hiding in the black shelter of the peat heaps, and for a moment or two remained thus, waiting for the order to begin the attack, and I saw Gustav Fervet glide out from behind a mound of turf, and cross the little stream of light that was cast from a window.

The steady footstep of the sentry was suddenly changed into a curious shuffling noise, and a faint cry came, but it was stilled the next instant. Nor was the measured tramp of his walk to and fro, heard again, and Gustav Fervet stole back through the glint of light, panting as does one who has run a long distance or done some work that has breathed him. He whispered a word or two to the men who had been next him behind the heap of peat, and I knew that the moment had come for our moving to the attack.

The silence seemed so strange that I felt myself wondering at it, as we moved towards the guard-room, and why those within the castle did not rush upon us in a body and hurl us back into the black water of the dock, but the stillness remained unbroken. There was a glimmering of light from the guard-room window, and it showed me the huddled figure of a soldier on the ground, but whether he were dead or no I cannot say. It was the sentry who had marched to and fro, and I understood the reason for our leader having come back breathing so heavily.

So quietly had we advanced that our presence was as unknown to the soldiers in the guard-room as if we were twenty leagues from them, and those of us that carried firing-pieces were ordered in a hoarse whisper to take our places before the window, and



fire through it at the men within. I could see them sitting in a group at a table over their cards, and now that I was so close to them, the sound of their voices could be heard, coming muffled through the stout glass of the casement. It was the cruellest piece of work ever done, that firing on them, but it was their lives or ours that were at stake, and I held my snaphaunce steadily pointed at one of the soldiers, whose ragged red beard gave him a ferocious look.

I do not remember the order to fire being given, and maybe none was, for a crash that rang out like a thunder clap mingled with horrid shrieks and yells of pain and alarm drove every thought from my mind. We had fired a crackling volley, as one man, and in an instant the scene became too confused for me to remember very distinctly what followed. The thick smoke hid the sight within the guard-room from my eyes, and we had rushed into the castle, meeting a number of the garrison, who seemed to crumble before our assault and disappear. Then we were in a hand-to-hand fight, passing through it further into the stronghold, driving the enemy before us, and trampling over the bodies of friend and foe, giving no quarter nor receiving any, even when the fight slackened somewhat, or a wounded man went staggering against the wall, too weak to wield sword or dagger longer. And of the sixty

men who had gained entrance into the castle fortress of Breda, no more than thirty of us reached the room wherein the governor, with so many of his officers as remained alive, had retreated, and upon them we threw ourselves, cutting and thrusting at all who opposed us, and although we were so few in number a few moments later we were masters of the fortress. The garrison, which was composed of Italian soldiers for the most part, had fled, escaping into the open country, and Breda had been snatched out of the grasp of the enemy.

So soon as some sort of quiet came, my first thought was of Pretorius, whom I had lost sight of from the moment of our attacking the guard-room, yet though I searched for him it was without success, and the gruesome task of looking amid the dead and wounded in the narrow passages through which we had fought our way being done I quitted the fortress, and made my way into the city, which was in a tumult of excitement. The citizens had roused themselves and driven the last of their enemies out of the place, and were preparing to assist any attack which the baffled Spaniards or the mercenary Italian soldiery might make to regain possession of it.

Although I had not succeeded in finding my companion I was in great hopes of doing so presently, and I determined to continue my search as soon as

I got some food for him and myself, which was a more important thing to discover than anything else just then. For the attack on the castle had been made so expeditiously that we had no opportunity of getting any provisions, and now that the excitement of the fight was over, I was faint for want of food. There had been no sort of order in the seizing of the fortress nor after this was accomplished, and every one who had a hand in the business and had come out of it alive was free to go as he liked, and what better was to be done than in searching after something to refresh my bruised body. For bruised and wounded I was, and that sorely, so that having come to a house whereof the door stood invitingly open, I sank down on a chair in the room which I entered, hearing the rumble of the citizens' voices, yet caring naught, being too greatly concerned with fears of Pretorius Brandt's safety and my own hunger.

Maybe I looked a stranger sight than is natural to me, for a bent old man, who came into the room where I sat with my aching limbs, suddenly drew back and would have locked the door on me if I had not started up and thrust my foot against it.

"What evil now is to come on me?" he exclaimed in a whining voice, that bespoke him to be a Jew, if his hooked nose had not told me that already.

"Gentle sir, do me no harm, I pray of thee, for I am but a helpless old man, whose goods have been carried away, saving such as were not worth either the saving nor taking."

"I am not one to hurt you," I answered, "and have had my share and more of noise and violence. But I am hungry, and so if you have food in the house, I will eat it with you."

"Ay, that is reasonable," he replied, "and a customer is welcome, though the very walls of Breda were tumbling to the ground. Maybe you have heard that there has been a great disturbance in the castle."

"If I am a customer," I told him, "it will be one who has nothing to pay you with, and as for the disturbance as you call it at the castle, it is something more. For the garrison has been driven out and fled after desperate fighting, and the city is won from the Spaniards."

"Holy Abraham," he exclaimed, putting the lamp on the floor, so that he might clasp his shrivelled hands. "The garrison driven out of the castle, d'ye tell me, and some of them dead! There was a gallant there who owed me ten ducats for a chain to fasten his cloak. Ten ducats, mark you—don't tell me he is dead."

His concern was so great that he appeared to forget

my hunger, whereupon I answered him somewhat roughly, and he bid me follow him to an inner room, where were food and drink on the table, at which I seated myself whilst he sat opposite me, gnawing his beard and croaking dismally over his money loss. And as he was gabbling on, telling me that a gentleman newly come from Antwerp had made an offer for the chain which the Italian officer had brought, some one was heard calling from the outer room, and the Jew got up from his chair.

“ ’Tis the noble gentleman from Antwerp,” he exclaimed, “ and I must attend him.”

The noble gentleman, forsooth ! It was the voice of Mynheer Dickers I had heard calling “ Mendoza ” so haughtily, and I followed the old fellow to the door, meeting Dickers face to face as he stood at it, and for an instant his hand had been on the gaudy hilt of his sword.

## CHAPTER XV

### BETRAYED

MAYBE it was the surprise at seeing me which caused Mynheer Dickers to half draw his sword from its scabbard, but he thrust the weapon back with a clash, and changed his scowling look for a pleasanter one the next moment.

“The news went in Antwerp that you and Pretorius Brandt had perished,” he began, making as if he would have shaken me by the hand, but did not. “Mynheer Brandt believed this.”

“Where is Mynheer Brandt ? ” I asked eagerly. “We found that he and his daughter had gone away from Antwerp. Into Spain with you, Mynheer Dickers, we were told.”

“And truly,” he answered. “Antwerp was not a safe place to remain in, and after consulting with Mynheer Brandt it was settled that he and his daughter should go with me into Spain, where I have friends who will protect them. But a dozen obstacles have hindered us. ’Tis one thing

to say 'one will go to another country ; getting there is a different matter. We came to Breda in hopes of finding a ship to carry us to Madrid, but there has been no getting away from the place again."

He spoke in such a friendly manner that the dislike I felt formerly towards him disappeared, and when he said further that we would go at once to the house where Mynheer Brandt and Anna were living, I was overjoyed at the thought of seeing them again.

But there was Pretorius to be sought for first. He might have fallen during the attack on the fortress, in which so many men had been slain, and for all that I was eager to go with Mynheer Dickers, it was not to be thought of until I had done my best to discover my companion's fate.

Mynheer Dickers left me to search alone for Pretorius, and wishing me success, we parted after arranging to meet each other later, in a spot which he described. Then we were to go to the place where Mynheer Brandt was living, and he said this in so friendly a manner that I almost upbraided myself for ever having thought ill of him.

By the time I had ended my search after Pretorius I was wearied to death. To say nothing of that long journey down the river to Breda, there had been the fierce excitement of the fight within the

fortress; and when at length I was so tired that I was fain to rest myself it was with a mournful feeling that my companion and I would never meet again. I was thinking thus when one of the men who had come with us from the *Angel* approached me, staggering along beneath a load of plunder he had taken, and I called to him, asking whither he was going.

“Those who have come alive out of this venture are going back to the *Angel*,” said the fellow, grinning. “And as you are one of them, it behoves you to bestir thyself. The boat that is to carry us lies at the quay, and the saints helping me, I shall go back richer than I came.”

He told me he had seen nothing of Pretorius, and bade me hasten or the boat would be gone.

“You will tell the chaplain that I have been left here, and that Pretorius Brandt is either dead or a prisoner,” I said. “Furthermore, that I have found Mynheer Brandt. The chaplain will understand the message.”

The man promised to say this, and walked away, dropping some of his burden, yet not waiting to pick up what had fallen in his haste to reach the boat. So I was left alone again, none heeding me, and having rested some time longer, I made my way at last to the place which Mynheer Dickers had appointed for our meeting each other.



He was awaiting my coming, and was full of sorrow that Pretorius was not with me, listening attentively whilst I described the search I had made. It was nearly dusk by this time, and as the house wherein Mynheer Brandt was lodged stood a short distance beyond the walls of the city, Dickers said it was needful for us to start thither at once.

Now although I have said but little of the venture by which Breda was recovered from the Spanish, there were a great many events connected with it that I might describe were it needful. Suffice it to say that a great excitement prevailed in the city, and preparations were being hastily made to drive off the enemy, should they attack the place. The news that the "Beggars of the Sea" had helped in the rescue was in everybody's mouth, and as we went along I told Dickers that Pretorius and I were members of the company of sea-rovers, and because he was so friendly towards me, praising the courage my companions and I had shown in attacking the fortress, and driving out the garrison, I was very open with him.

He was quite as outspoken in denouncing the Spanish as I in speaking of Captain Jonas Marck and the Reverend Miles Lambert, and we walked onward until the flickering lights of Breda disappeared and we came to a little village which he

told me the name of, but I forget now what it was called.

“We are nearly at our journey’s end,” said he in the kindly way that had made our walk so pleasant. “Mynheer Brandt will be overjoyed at seeing you, and the house wherein he is lodging is no further than half a league beyond this. But we will rest here a little while, and get food and drink.”

Although I was loath to linger in meeting Mynheer Brandt, and more than eager to see Anna once more, I was glad enough to rest awhile, and being come to a tavern we went in. Mynheer Dickers ordered supper to be brought us, as we sat down before the fire in the room into which we entered, and being more wearied than ever, I stretched myself in a great armchair, thinking of a thousand things in a drowsy fashion, whilst the table was being set for our meal. Mynheer Dickers was friendlier than he had been yet, and although there were the hum of voices without the room, and the tread of heavy footsteps, I paid no heed to them. The warmth and rest were fast lulling me to sleep, I think, when suddenly I was aroused by hearing the door flung open and some one come striding into the room. Mynheer Dickers had got up from his chair and was speaking to the newcomer in a low voice, and then he pointed to me.





CAPTAIN PEDRO CAME FORWARD, CLAIMING ME AS HIS PRISONER.

“ This is the fellow I told you of, Captain Pedro,” he said. “ He who was one of the busiest in slaughtering the garrison in Breda. He belongs to the company who are called the “ Beggars of the Sea,” and will give you information about them, so that he be questioned shrewdly.”

The man addressed as Captain Pedro came forward and put his hand heavily on my shoulder, claiming me as his prisoner, whilst Dickers, standing beside him, gave me a sneering look. I understood everything then, and that the traitorous fellow had betrayed me into the hands of the Spaniards. I was powerless to resist ; and after having my hands fast bound I was delivered into the keeping of two soldiers who had orders to shoot me if I attempted to escape.

“ I fear it will be a long time,” said Dickers in a jeering voice, “ ere you see Mynheer Brandt, or join your cut-throat friends again” ; and though I was almost beside myself with rage, there were no words I could find to answer him.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE HANGMAN OF BRILL

I SAW no more of Mynheer Dickers, for early the next morning the company of Spanish soldiers marched out of the village, taking me with them as a prisoner. Captain Pedro had questioned me, and I had answered him so far as I thought it wise, but certainly not as he wished, for he promised me a different sort of examination presently. He would have liked to know everything I could tell him respecting the "Beggars of the Sea," but I deemed it wise not to enlighten him, and then he went on to ask me about the capturing of the fortress of Breda. He doubted whether I spoke truly when I said that I knew very little of that business, except helping in it, and after this he left me, going away in a passion, vowing I should be taught to speak, and recollecting the stories I had heard of the cruel way in which the Spaniards treated their prisoners, I was exceedingly troubled in mind by his threat.

We travelled slowly, coming at length to a town,

the name of which I could not learn, for no answers were given to my questions, and here I was left in the keeping of a man who told me he was the public executioner, and that I should be well provided for until such time as it was decided that I was to be hanged.

“Which time,” said he, as we went along, “may come soon, or late, but be of good heart, for it will arrive of a certainty.”

“Why is there to be any waiting?” I answered, being very downhearted, and caring nothing of what might become of me.

“That I know not,” said my gaoler. “Captain Pedro and his company are needed elsewhere, perhaps, and have no time to spend on you. There was something said of putting you to the rack, so that it might loosen your tongue, but racking and hanging are not to be performed hastily, and Captain Pedro has put off the doing of them until a more convenient opportunity. There is no cause for your being impatient, for until he comes back to Brill, nothing will be done to you, although I have everything ready for your being questioned.”

I had discovered the name of the town, and also that besides being hangman and headsman, my gaoler was the sworn tormentor also, yet there was nothing in his looks that betrayed his horrible

trade. He had a smooth round face and a ready smile, whilst his voice was as kindly as ever I heard, and for all that he had broken criminals on the wheel, racked more people than he could recollect the number of, and hanged a score of prisoners no later than a month since, which things he told me as one might who took an honest pride in their calling, he was gentle enough with me.

By the time my blood ran cold with horror at the dreadful tales he told, we had come to the building in which I was to be imprisoned. It was a square tower, having a tall sloping roof, and midway up the wall was an opening closely barred. Above the opening was a clock with one hand, and the entrance into the place was through a narrow door in a great buttress which stretched into the roadway and reached high up the wall. Some tumbledown little houses stood against the tower, at the door of one of which was a woman, having a little child in her arms, and the executioner stayed in unlocking the door of my prison to speak to the woman, whose eyes gave me a pitying look.

"You are a busy man, Mynheer Teufel," said she, holding up her child for him to kiss. "The busiest in Brill since the Spaniards took it."

"'Tis but one more bird to put into its cage," replied Mynheer Teufel, as pleasantly as one could



speak. "An English bird, too, and being strayed so far, 'twas thought best to find him some food and shelter, or harm might happen to him," and he laughed good-humouredly, as if saying this was the merriest joke ever spoken.

Then he turned the lock, which shot back with a screech, and bid me pass through the doorway before him. This I did, and after securing the door, Mynheer Teufel groped in the darkness for some moments, until I heard him striking a flint and steel, humming a dismal tune as he did so. When he had blown a spark on the tinder, he lit a lantern, and I saw a flight of crumbling stone steps, up which he went, looking back once or twice, warning me to follow him cautiously, so that I might not bruise myself in the steep winding ascent.

"You will have bruises enough and to spare," said he, "when you have worn the boot, or been racked, so be careful as you come after me," and he held the lantern down so that I might see my way the better.

There were seventy steps, for I counted them almost without knowing I did so, before we reached my prison, that was a low-pitched room, into which the rays of the setting sun came through the barred opening I had noticed in the wall of the tower. There was a small trap door, by which we entered,

and I looked round me at the stout beams of the ceiling and the grey stone walls that had some iron rings fastened in them. A wooden bench went along one side of the room, but nothing else was in it, and Mynheer Teufel asked me whether I could have desired a better lodging.

“There is nothing to pay for living here,” he said, and there was a twinkling in his eyes, “neither any charges made for your food and drink. Many a guest has grieved at leaving this pleasant place,” and he began laughing.

I was in a mind to ask him why I was to be kept a prisoner, and presently put to death, for he had made it plain to me that this was to be my fate, but I held my peace. The remembrance of Mynheer Brandt and Anna, whom I had been hopeful of meeting again, and the treachery of Dickers who had betrayed me, so filled my mind that I had neither hope nor fear for myself in it, and the hangman might gossip on until he was tired without my heeding him.

He was thoughtful enough to leave the lantern behind him when he went, or I should have been in darkness that night, and for some time after he had gone I sat listening to the movement of the clock-work, which could be heard groaning and creaking in the chamber above me. Then, after I had begun to think my gaoler had forgotten me, he came through

the trap door like an evil spirit, bringing me some food and drink, which I had no appetite for.

Although the wind blew coldly through the barred opening, I slept soundly that night, and in the morning my gaoler brought me some more food, giving one of his merry laughs at seeing my rueful look.

“ ’Tis no help for one to be heavy-hearted,” said he, “when things have gone amiss with him. There is nothing so bad but what it might be worse, and so be of good courage.”

“How long will it be before I am hanged ?” I asked recklessly. “For that would be better than being kept in this dismal place.”

“You have yet a month to live. Maybe Captain Pedro will come to Brill in a less time, and that would assuredly shorten your life. But before you are hanged there is your being questioned, yet as that may prove a disagreeable business ’tis best not spoken of.”

So I asked him nothing further, and being left alone, I got myself into the opening, which had a broad sill, on which I crouched, holding on to the bars, and looking down I was able to see into the street and across the house roof to where the fortifications encircled the town. Brill was only a small place, but its defences were very strong, and from

my elevated position was a view of a broad river, beside which was a gateway in the rampart defending that part. This was the main entrance to Brill from the seaward, and I could see the fishermen landing their catch, and boats that came lazily from the inland with goods unloading on the little quay.

Below me the street was usually silent and empty, but I could observe the passers-by who walked on the side of it opposite the tower, and seated in the opening I used to watch them day after day, until I came to know whom to expect to see. There was a blind man, guided by a dog, and at a certain hour a fat, well-dressed burgher, who was some one of consequence, I suppose, from his furred gown and golden chain. There were others, too, who passed by, giving no thought of the prisoner, even if they had known of his being in that lonely room in the grey old tower, and at last I was able to tell a stranger from the townsfolk, so familiar were these latter to me.

Mynheer Teufel, by the time he had had me in his keeping for a month, became so friendly that I almost forgot his dismal calling. He would sit and talk with me for an hour or longer, describing how Brill fell into the hands of the Spanish and how grievously the people were taxed, besides giving me such news as was being spoken of regarding the

troubles that were in every part of the country. He had desisted from speaking about my being tortured and hanged, however, and for this I was grateful to him, but the hope of ever seeing my friends again or being free had well nigh left me.

One morning Mynheer Teufel brought me a double portion of food, saying I should not see him until the morrow, for he had important business on hand that day. He wore a different dress from that which I had seen him in before ; a black leathern jerkin with a device worked on the arm in scarlet. There was the figure of a wheel and above this a gibbet, and he held out his elbow, bringing his arm close to me, so that I might see the device clearly.

“ These are my signs of office,” said he, “ and mark me out from men of a lowlier condition in the town than mine. There is a witch to be burnt in the market square this day, and the business is somewhat different from ordinary. Moreover the burning of a witch or a Protestant is not so harmless an affair as you may think.”

I told him such a dreadful thing had never been in my thoughts, at which he opened his eyes widely, as if surprised, and that I could not understand the danger of it, except to the miserable wretch at the stake.

“ I have had stones and other missiles hurled at

me as I was about my duty," he said, "and no longer ago than a year there happened a most unfortunate mischance to a relative of mine. For by order of the Cardinal of Roubaix, a clergyman of Gouda was ordered to be burnt at the stake, and would have been, in as orderly a way as becomes the business, for the faggots were beginning to blaze bravely, when a woman threw her shoe in the air, which was a signal to those standing by, it seems, who dashed the flaming faggots hither and thither, scorching the executioner who was none less than my own half-brother, and in a trice the clergyman was a dozen yards away from the stake. One of the law-breakers had severed the chain that was around the prisoners' quarters; another had cast water over him to put out the smoulder of his nether garments, and a third struck the executioner's chief assistant so shrewdly on the ear that the poor fellow was driven backwards on to some flaring embers on which he sat thoughtlessly until the bite of the fire caused him to spring up, yelling that the Evil One was at his heels."

Having explained the hazard that his calling exposed him to, Mynheer Teufel went off to his duty, and I did not see him again until the evening, when he came into the room bringing a strange odour of smoke and scorching with him. He was very cheer-

ful, however, and was for describing what had gone forward during the day, but I begged him to desist.

The days dragged on, and nearly two months had passed without any orders coming as to what was to be done with me, but one morning Mynheer Teufel brought me word that I was to be taken before a magistrate and examined.

"You will then be delivered into my hands," he went on to tell me, "and in due course hanged, for there is nothing else to be done."

"When am I to be brought before the magistrates?" I asked, my heart sinking at the prospect.

"In three days, or at most four," he replied, and then he left me to ponder over what he had said.

Three days! I sat crouched in my accustomed place, thinking of all the dreadful tales Mynheer Teufel had told me, and watching the passers-by as I had done so many times before. There came the blind man, led by his dog, and tapping the stones as he went, and after him the haughty fellow in his gown and golden chain. Then after a while came others whom I recognized, and I was on the point of quitting the window, when suddenly there appeared from the corner of the street, the figure of a man at

sight of whom I gave a shout of joy. For the stranger in the street was the Reverend Miles Lambert, and his honest face was upturned to the tower as I called to him.



## CHAPTER XVII

### THE FRIAR

THE chaplain was dressed as a friar, having a rope girdle and sandalled feet. His head was bare and shaved except for a narrow ring of brown hair, and as he stood gazing upward, his face wore a look of bewilderment. Then he had caught sight of me as I pressed against the bars, that were too closely set for my head to pass between them.

“Holy fathers,” he called back, glancing round as if fearing to be overheard. “How came you up there, Thomas Rede?”

Now to explain how I got into prison at Brill, and the keeping of the public executioner, would have been a difficult matter from the height in which I was placed, and I suppose the chaplain understood this, for he put his finger on his lips, and drawing his cowl over his head walked demurely onward. I cannot well describe the sudden mournfulness that seized me when he did this, the thought that I should never see him again, and in all likelihood be hanged

ere the week was out, making me more downhearted than I had been in my most sorrowful moods. But the strangeness of seeing the Reverend Miles Lambert in the street of Brill, garbed in a fashion that made him look the jolliest friar who ever was, gave me food for other thoughts, and occupied my mind until I heard the bolt of the trap door withdrawn, and saw Mynheer Teufel's round face in the opening. He had brought my evening meal, and having placed it on the bench stood regarding me thoughtfully.

"I have been talking with a pious friar, who being come from Brussels, or some such part of the country, for the purpose of seeing some one hereabouts—maybe 'twas the Cardinal of Roubaix, for he mentioned that name, if I remember rightly—hath heard of you," began Mynheer Teufel. "Said he, it had been told him that one Thomas Rede is in prison, which was true enough, yet not the whole of the truth. I told him that not only were you a prisoner, but in so much danger of being hanged that you might be looked upon as dead," and he laughed as if this were something to make merry over, "for news has come that Captain Pedro will be in Brill by to-morrow, and this business of yours may be hurried."

"It would be a cruel thing to punish me, when I have done nothing to warrant punishment," I said.

"I have naught to say to that. My business is to obey such lawful orders as may be given me," he answered. "I told this to the friar when he spoke to me about you, and we were of one mind that every heretic ought to be burned, and every malcontent hanged."

"Did he say anything else?" I inquired.

"Nothing, save to offer to give you some ghostly comfort if so be that you needed any. He is waiting below for your consent to his speaking to you."

"I should be very grateful for his visit," I said, as calmly as I could, for I knew Mynheer Teufel was speaking of the chaplain, and when I had said this, he went to the trap door, calling down the winding stairs for my ghostly comforter to come to me.

I heard the flip-flap of the chaplain's sandals as he came up the steps, and then his shaven head appeared through the trap door, and of all the faces in the world his was the welcomest to see at that moment.

Mynheer Teufel left us together, the chaplain bestowing a blessing on him as he disappeared through the opening in the floor, and then for a moment or two the Reverend Miles Lambert and I could do nothing but look at each other in astonishment.

"How came you in Brill?" I asked at last.

"Has any news been heard of Pretorius Brandt?"

"He is safe aboard the *Angel*," he answered, at which my heart leaped for joy. "And as to my coming to Brill, that is not so important a question as how you and I are to get out of it. That kindly man below told me you were to be put to death shortly, for some reason that did not concern him to know."

I explained in as few words as possible the manner of my being betrayed by Mynheer Dickers into the hands of the Spanish after the seizing of Breda, to all of which the chaplain listened attentively, wagging his head to and fro. "It seems to me," he said, when I had ended my story, "that I have come to Brill at a lucky moment for you, my son. Thank Captain Marck for that. It is his purpose to capture Brill, and so that he might get some information regarding the opposition he might meet with, I have undertaken the part of spying out the nakedness of the land. To that end, Captain Marck shaved my head, and may the saints reward him for his using a dull razor, that cut more like a handsaw than an honest blade, but the torture was over in less than an hour, and left me as you see. My skull is monstrous cold, however, so I will cover it as we talk," and he drew his cowl over his head.

"I donned a friar's robe, and a pair of sandals fashioned by the sailmaker, who hath left more pain-

ful stitches in them than were needful, and having been rowed up the river to within a short distance from Brill, I walked into the town as best I could, by reason of these villainous sandals of mine." Then he went on to tell me how Captain Marck, having been joined by the *Wolf*, was determined upon attacking Brill, but even that did not seem such an important affair as my escaping the fate that threatened me so closely.

We were talking thus when Mynheer Teufel interrupted us by coming up to the room to tell me that I was to be taken before the magistrates early next morning.

"The business will be soon over," he said, as if that were any comfort to me, "and unless you are ordered to be put to the rack, or maybe the iron boot, for either will serve to unloose your tongue, you will be quit of the world ere night. 'Tis a providential thing that this holy friar is here to comfort your last hours."

"The luckiest thing that ever happened," replied the chaplain, who sat twiddling his thumbs and fingers. "I might have been too late to-morrow."

"Of a surety you would have been too late," said my gaoler. "For unless some miracle is performed, this is your last night in prison, my poor friend," and he gave me a kindly smile.

"'Tis a troublesome world," sighed the chaplain. "I have my share of trouble, not to say sharp pain," and he lifted up one foot with a little groan.

"And I have seen plenty of troubles myself," went on Mynheer Teufel, "although I cannot say truly that they fell to my lot. But one in my office must not have too tender a heart, and so I am fain to ask you to end your visit quickly. The hour is getting late, and I have to scourge a purse-cutting knave before cooking my supper. I will wait by the trap door, therefore, whilst you speak your last with the English lad."

Miles Lambert gave Mynheer Teufel a look from beneath the edge of his cowl; a look very like the one he gave the blustering bully in the inn in Antwerp, and I put my hand on his arm. Even if my gaoler were sent headlong down the winding stairs, I could not escape. Mynheer Teufel might raise an alarm, and that would most certainly bring the chaplain and myself to destruction.

Then the chaplain's face cleared. "Far be it from me," he said, "to hinder you in your business, but I must not be hurried in mine. I have yet something to say to your prisoner, and to hear his confession, so prythee leave us alone for a short space," and although Mynheer Teufel grumbled a little at this, he consented to wait for the matter of

a quarter of an hour longer, before locking up the tower for the night.

We waited until he was out of hearing before we spoke to each other.

“If you are ever to escape,” said he, “it must be to-night. To-morrow will be too late, and so what has to be done must be done now. There is only one way out of the place for you, unless that moon-faced hangman leave the trap door unbolted, which is not to be hoped for, to say nothing of meeting him on the stairs; so your escape can only be through the window.”

“That would be an easy matter if I could fly,” I answered, thinking of the distance from the window to the ground.

“See here, my son,” he exclaimed, suddenly beginning to unloosen his rope girdle. “Busy yourself in unravelling this. Fasten the strands together so that they make a line—there will be length enough to reach to the foot of the tower from the window.”

I took the piece of rope, which was in length about six feet, and loosely twisted.

“Yet, first of all, you must remove some of the bars from the opening. Take this dagger which Captain Marck urged me to carry, for all that my bare fists would have protected me passing well in a scuffle. The bars must be most marvellous

deep set, if you cannot move them in an hour or less. By that time darkness will be come, and when the rope strands are fastened together, let the line drop through the opening. I shall be below ; the hangman will be cooking that supper of his, and by the time he has eaten it you shall be out of his clutches."

I took the dagger, that had a stout blade, and the chaplain was explaining how I was to draw up a rope which he would provide, when we were interrupted again by Mynheer Teufel, who was somewhat fretful at the delay in his scourging of the miserable wretch, who had been expecting him half an hour past, he said, and so with a blessing bestowed on me in the Latin, and another on goodly Mynheer Teufel, as he called him, Miles Lambert and my gaoler went away down the winding staircase, and no sooner had the trap door been bolted than I began my preparations for escaping.

The getting out the iron bars from their holding-places was an easier matter than I expected, for the mortar around them had mouldered away. In a very short time I had three of the bars removed, giving space for me to get my shoulders through. The distance to the ground was greater than I had thought it to be when I looked upward to the window on my coming, and I was in grave doubts whether the unravelled strands would reach to the



ground. Yet as I pulled the rope apart, fastening the ends of the strands one to the other, the line grew to a great length, and by the time it was finished proved amply sufficient for my purpose.

It was such a delight to feel the freedom of the fresh air, that I reached out from the opening, watching the scene that lay around, until darkness began spreading over it. I could see a greater way than I had ever been able to do before, and make out the figure of the ramparts easily. I could watch the river winding seaward, and the broad dykes that kept it from inundating the land on either side. Below me the street lay silent and deserted, a broad black shadow being cast by the great buttress of the tower. Then I saw Mynheer Teufel cross the street on his return from the thief's scourging, and fearing he might see me if he looked up I got down from the window giving a last glance in the direction of the river, seeing some lights twinkling on it in the far distance.

It was so still, that although the gaoler's room was a long way from my prison, a fear seized me that he might hear the movements I made as I moved about. It was nearly black dark also as I fastened one of the iron bars to the end of the line of rope strands, and then I cautiously lowered it through the window, hearing the chink as it touched

the rough wall in its descent, swaying in the gentle breeze until it reached the ground, and I waited impatiently for the signal to draw it up again. It was impossible to see the ground, but I knew that the chaplain was standing in the shadow of the buttress, and in a few moments I felt a pull on the line. The signal was repeated, and I began drawing up, feeling the weight growing greater every moment.

My fear was that the frail thing would break, but it held bravely, and at last my hand felt the rope which had been fastened to the end of it—a rope stout enough to bear me, and I could have shouted with joy as I began to secure it round the leg of the bench.

My life depended on the fixing of the rope, and I was doing this, when without any warning the trap was thrown up. I must have been too intent on my work not to have heard the bolt of the door being withdrawn, and to have forgotten Mynheer Teufel's kindly custom of bringing me a lantern at nightfall, but however this might be his unexpected appearance caused me to start backward, dismayed, and the next instant he had come forward, sprawling over the rope which stretched from the window to the bench.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### I ESCAPE

“**G**IBBETS and racks ! ” cried Mynheer Teufel, getting himself to his feet and staring at me as if I had been something horrible to behold. “ What have we here ? ” and then he seemed to come to his senses, for he ran to the window, and leaning out, held his lantern the full length of his arm, to see whence the rope came from.

“ And this is the reward for all the kindnesses you have received at my hands,” he cried, turning on me. “ You would doubtless have slid down the rope and gone without a thought of what story I should have to tell the magistrates to-morrow.”

Now I was so crestfallen and angry at his hindering my escape that I answered him carelessly.

“ Yes, that is the truth,” I said. “ If you had been in my case, you would have done as I have were the chance given you. Remember that you told me I am to be hanged.”

“And what of that? Hanging is no such serious a matter as folks think, but losing one’s office is a grave affair. And I should have lost mine, to say naught of the figure I should have made when I told their worshipful sirs that my prisoner had flown. Therefore, to save further risk thereof, I must clip your wings.”

Mynheer Teufel’s manner of clipping my wings, as he called it, was to fasten my ankles to a short iron rod, and the rod to one of the rings which were in the wall. This he did after drawing up the rope, that resisted him for a long time, inasmuch as the Reverend Miles Lambert was holding to the other end of it, I think. But he must have dropped off, for the rope suddenly drew up so swiftly that Mynheer Teufel fell backward on his head, and the end of the rope came wriggling like a snake through the opening.

“How in the name of St. Titus,” exclaimed he, “did you become possessed of this? I have my doubts of that holy friar—may I be forgiven for that—” and he stopped rubbing his head to cross himself—“for good rope such as this does not grow on stone walls.”

He became angry when I did not answer him, promising to remember me for that when the handles of the rack were in his grasp. Then he fettered my

limbs, and taking the rope and lantern went down the stairs, leaving me in such a miserable condition of mind that he might have hanged me there and then without my complaining.

The iron chain was long enough to permit me to reach the opening, and being made desperate by Mynheer Teufel's discovery of my attempt to escape I called loudly down into the darkness, but no voice answered, and when I had called half a dozen times I lay down on the bare floor trying to sleep through that dismal night. The grey dawn came at length, the last daybreak I might ever see, and raising my aching body I got to the opening again.

There was an angry murmur in the air, the sounds of shouts and cries mingling with it; and as I looked towards that part of the fortification where the gateway gave to the river, it was to see two vessels lying in the stream, and a crowd of men struggling on the quay. I was so much higher than even the tallest of the houses that lay between the river and my place of confinement, that I could see clearly what went on at the gateway. Moreover, I could make out a sign floated from the mast-head of the nearest ship, and I had seen the wooden bowl too often to be mistaken in it now. For Captain Jonas Marck and his company of the "Beggars of the Sea" had made their attack on Brill, and were

driving the defenders of the place before them into the town like a flock of sheep.

The murmur had become a roar, and through the silent street, wherein stood the tower, came a hurrying throng of citizens. I could see the haughty gentleman whom I had noticed so often running with his furred gown tucked under his armpits, and his spidery legs taking long leaps, so eager was he to be gone, and on his shoulder he carried a little box which maybe held his golden chain and the rest of his trinkets. And holding on to a stout lady's gown hurried the blind man, stumbling over his dog now and again, whilst some purse-bodied fellows, who might have been the magistrates by whom my fate would have been sealed, were to be seen in the crowd.

And after these had passed came the Spanish soldiery who garrisoned Brill, fighting as they retreated, and bravely, too, yet unable to withstand the "Beggars of the Sea." The fight was sternest just about that part where stood the tower, and I watched the fierce struggle from my vantage-point with a keenness that made me forget my dolorous state for the time.

Then into the fight dashed the chaplain, who had discarded his friar's robe, but whose shaven pate made him conspicuous amid the confusion and press.

Never yet did a man fight with greater eagerness than he, and as the struggle lingered a few moments at the buttress of the tower, I shouted to him, whereupon he looked up with a grin on his bloodstained face, and bade me be of good heart, for he was coming anon to give me freedom, and then the mad whirl of the fight drifted up the street, leaving a track of dead and wounded men to mark its passage.

I was so intent on the sight that it was not until a hand was laid on my shoulder that I turned from the opening to see Mynheer Teufel standing behind me.

“Gay doings these,” he said, as if he were doubtful which side to take in the struggle below. “Everything is being upset in Brill, it seems to me. For a pack of raging mad seamen have burst open the watergate, and slaughtered every Spaniard they could lay hands on. Moreover, all law and order is at an end, and if I had not scourged that cut-purse overnight, he would have escaped punishment, ’tis likely. Therefore, to secure you in safety until the town has recovered its senses, ’twill be best that you are got into the dungeon beneath the tower. No one will harm you there, for the place is as dark as a wolf’s mouth, and unless the river overflow as dry as a salted herring.”

A thought suddenly came to me that it would

be a wise thing to humour Mynheer Teufel, although I had no intention of being carried to the dungeon.

“Who knows but what they may search the tower,” I replied; “and so let me get to a safer place than this, good Mynheer Teufel. Yet as you have fastened me to the wall and fettered my limbs, you must first set me free of my legs.”

He had a bundle of keys at his belt, and with one of these he unlocked the iron bands that held my ankles, and the next instant they had fallen off. Another, and I had given him such a sturdy blow that he rolled over as he stooped, and I had gained the trap-door before he recovered himself. He made a rush to stay me, but I was too quick for him, and as he reached the trap, the door fell to, and I had shot the bolt, leaving him shouting vengeance upon me as I ran down the winding stairs and out into the glorious sunshine—free at last.

No one hindered me, for except that there were some frightened women’s faces at the casements of the house past which I ran, there was nobody to be seen. I was guided by the sounds of clashing swords in the direction which the fight had taken, but by the time I had reached the spot where the last of the struggle was proceeding, it was to see it end. In the doorway of an ancient house, the chaplain was



holding two Spanish soldiers at his sword-point, and to my great joy I saw Pretorius coming towards me out of the fray. The fighting was over, for at this instant the Spaniards held by the chaplain had thrown down their weapons, and the "Beggars of the Sea" were masters of Brill.

It was a moment never to be forgotten when Pretorius and I grasped each other by the hand, but it was not a time for much talking. The chaplain had joined us, wiping his bloodstained face with the ragged corner of the friar's robe, and now that the fury of fighting had abated within him, his natural manner returned. There was a merry twinkle in his eyes as he roared out a greeting at seeing me, and my fingers tingled with the grasp he gave my hand.

"I had given up all thought of seeing you more," he cried. "For instead of descending the rope last night, you essayed to pull me up to your prison. I kept my hold until falling from it came nigh to breaking my bones, and thinking you had lost your reason I was fain to leave you to your fate. But I am so famished with thirst that I could e'en drink water, though that were against my *credo*, so let us get to where some honest wine is to be bought or given, or taken willy-nilly, and let Jonas Marck rage like the north wind in winter as he may, neither

fighting nor talking will I do more until I have slaked my thirst."

So the chaplain, thrusting an arm under Pretorius' and mine, went striding down the street, until we came to a tavern where the jovial host welcomed us. We had driven away the Spaniards, and every citizen of Brill had reason for being grateful, said he, as he hastened to spread a meal for us.

"It was Mynheer Teufel," I said, as we sat at table, "who pulled you up, your reverence. He discovered me on the very point of my getting out of the window," and I told him what had happened afterwards.

Then Pretorius explained the reason for my not finding either him or his body after the capture of the fortress at Breda. He had been sorely wounded early in the attack, and carried back to the boat in which we had made that memorable voyage up the river. He had mourned me as dead long ago, having heard nothing of me since, and when I suddenly appeared to him it was like some one who had risen from the grave.

We patched up the chaplain's cut head as best could be, and having made a hearty meal quitted the house. I was bent on returning to the tower and releasing Mynheer Teufel, for I had no ill-will against him. So we three proceeded thither, going

first into the hangman's living room in the lower parts of the building, where the signs of his dreadful calling were to be seen, namely branding irons, a great axe that had its edge sheathed in a neat leather case, half a dozen coils of rope and sundry instruments of torture, which were arrayed on the wall over his sleeping bench. After this we went up the winding stairs and unlocked the trap-door, to find Mynheer Teufel in a better humour than one might have expected.

"I bear you no grudge, my lad," said he, "yet I would have you hold your peace concerning the manner in which you escaped from me. Many a more stalwart prisoner than you have I hanged, and that a stripling overcame me is nothing to my credit."

The Reverend Miles burst into a roar of laughter as he spied the rope, and the broken window bars, clapping the hangman on his brawny shoulder, calling him "good fellow," and wishing him joy of his gruesome business.

We were merry enough, and it was not until after we had found a comfortable lodging for the night, to which the chaplain brought me some clothing that I was sorely in need of, he having obtained it as "ransom," as he called it, from a Jew dealer, that I told Pretorius of his father and sister. The

chaplain listened as I spoke of Mynheer Dickers and the treachery he had shown in his betrayal of me to the Spanish, and the certainty that he would play the villain in his dealings with Mynheer Brandt.

"I take it that this Mynheer Dickers," said the chaplain, "had a reason for ridding himself of you. I have heard him spoken of as having been false to his friends and an enemy to his country."

"He shall answer me for aught he has done to harm my father and sister," replied Pretorius very quietly, and he looked up at me, but it needed not that I should answer him. If ever Mynheer Dickers and I met, I would repay him for his treachery.

We talked far into the night, and then the chaplain left us, saying he must needs see Captain Marck, but promising to return in the morning.

"For we have only begun this business," said he, "and there will be further fighting for those whose trade is to fight. The enemy will not rest contented to allow us to hold such a prize as Brill without struggling to snatch it from us, so take what rest you may whilst the chance is with you. Being a man of peace, and a chaplain moreover, I——" and then he gave a roaring laugh, remembering how he had held the two soldiers at his mercy a little time since.

So he went off, singing a stave of some merry song, for neither hurt nor hardship, strife or bloodshedding ever dulled the Reverend Miles Lambert's spirit.

## CHAPTER XIX

### BURNING THE SHIPS

NEXT morning Pretorius and I went aboard the *Angel*, that lay moored in the river near the water gate, and by that time I had learnt that since the capture of Breda the "Beggars" had been engaged in several brisk battles, and were eager for others. Half the crew were strangers to me, those who had been killed being replaced by men gathered from various ports, and a rougher set I never saw.

Captain Marck and the chaplain were pacing the quarter-deck as we came aboard, and if the *Angel* had looked ill-fitted and showed signs of battle when I first saw her, she seemed in worse plight now. But she was watertight and her rigging had been made good in parts, whilst her sails were freshly patched and the shot holes in her sides mended with planks nailed over them.

Captain Marck looked fiercer than before, having lost an eye lately, a great black patch being tied over the empty socket, and he would have spoken

longer to me, perhaps, if the chaplain had not twitched him by the sleeve.

“You have to hear what Don Guzman has to tell you,” he said, and at this Captain Marck frowned heavily, he and the chaplain going down the plank which led to the waist of the ship, the quarter-deck ladder having been shot away. Pretorius and I followed them, and descending into the hold, I saw a poor wretch who was suspended from a beam, to which he was fastened by a thin cord round his wrists, and the chaplain began questioning the miserable fellow, who did not answer him.

“Why should you bear such torments?” demanded the chaplain. “Answer the question as to where the treasure is hidden, and you shall be released from the beam.”

I know not what treasure the Reverend Miles Lambert spoke of, nor what the wretched man, whose agony was extreme, had to do with it, but when he remained silent, Captain Marck ordered weights to be put upon his feet, and that silenced him effectually, for he fainted from the pain. Whereupon I begged for him to be released, and the chaplain consented, although he did so very reluctantly.

“The madman, for such he must be in holding his peace, may thank his countrymen for teaching Captain Marck how to catechise so shrewdly,” he said.

“Does he think the ‘Beggars of the Sea’ are to receive no pay? Rest easy about Don Guzman, my lad, for he will be better anon, and more ready to speak.”

The Spaniard who had been taken prisoner at the onset of the attack upon Brill opened his eyes, and hearing me say something in his favour, gave me a grateful look, and I think would have spoken out to satisfy the chaplain and Captain Marck, when suddenly the boom of a cannon roared through the air and we hurried on deck.

“’Tis as was to be expected,” exclaimed Captain Marck. “The Spaniards have been re-inforced and mean to retake the town. The cannon shot is a signal, and you must wait, godly Master Lambert, before searching for the treasure.”

“Alack!” cried the chaplain. “Twice already has my hand been on riches that would suffice me, and now a third time I am driven from the prize. But ere the Spanish win back Brill, I will do my best in our holy cause, noble Jonas Marck. Verily the taste for battle grows on one; and if I were not a man of peace I had been a warrior.”

We were on the quarter-deck again as he finished the speech, and such men as could be spared from the *Angel* were being rowed ashore. From the *Wolf*, too; and presently we were at the water-gate, which



was closed and barricaded. By midday the Spanish had begun the attack, battering the walls from the cannon planted on the dyke which held back the river, and so fierce was the assault that very soon there were flaming houses and ruined buildings in several parts of the town.

Now for all that the walls of Brill were stout and high, the cannon upon them were few and ammunition scarce; whilst the enemy had both in plenty, which had been landed from the ships that could be seen a mile seaward of the *Angel* and *Wolf*, so that for our vessels to escape seemed impossible.

All this was clearly visible from the ramparts whereon Pretorius and I stood, and more also. For the walls would not withstand the furious battering very long, and then it would be a hand-to-hand fight in the narrow streets. Captain Marck and the chaplain were standing near us, and there was a more serious look in the captain's one eye than usual.

"This is like to be a sorry ending to our victory," said he to his companion.

"'Twill be a sorry ending of our lives, say rather," replied the other. "I am for sailing forth and bringing matters to an issue speedily, rather than being made a mark to be shot at," and as he spoke a ball came crashing against a cannon on the rampart,

utterly destroying it and three or four gunners at the same moment.

So we got ourselves down to a safe place and held a council of war, which was like to come to nothing if Pretorius had not conceived a plan.

“What is to hinder us from burning the Spanish ships?” he asked. “There are boats enough to carry those who are willing to undertake the duty, and I am ready for one.”

Now for all that it would be more than an ordinary hazard, Pretorius and I had shared too many dangers together for me to hold aloof from joining him in this, and so excellent was the plan considered by Captain Marck, that he ordered it to be put into execution forthwith. Men were collected at the water gate, and in a short time four boatloads of men, who had never feared anything yet, and were to be trusted to do their utmost in destroying the enemy’s ships, pushed off from the quay, and made their way down the river.

We had gone about half a mile, I suppose, before our errand was discovered by the Spaniards on the bank, but when it was, such a volley of bullets were poured into us that our destruction seemed certain. It would have been risking capture if we had sought shelter beneath the dyke, on which the Spaniards had planted their cannon,

and therefore our course was kept in mid-stream, the strong flood tide hindering us sadly. It seemed as if the boats were never to get out of distance from the enemy's fire, and our men for all their lusty rowing made little progress. I could see the Spanish gunners clearly, as they stood taking steady aim at us, so that every now and again a rower would drop his oar and fall either dead or wounded over the thwart. The boat I was in had a dozen men in her when we started from the water gate, but by the time we were midway to the ships there were only six of us who had escaped death or wounding.

How the other boats were faring I did not know, yet in spite of the fusillade we held on our way until out of reach of the bullets, and come to within a short distance from the four Spanish ships that lay at anchor near shore. The men left aboard them supposed us to be escaping from Brill, I think, for they were watching our approach without preparing to hinder us, and it was not until we were close to the foremost vessel that our errand was understood.

Running alongside one of the ships, we in the first boat to come up with her had thrown grappling irons aboard, and in a few moments were swarming on deck, meeting but little opposition, for the sudden attack and unexpectedness of it so astonished the crew that they retreated hastily. And this was a

wise thing, for so mad with rage were the "Beggars of the Sea" at the rough handling they had received in coming down the river that they were eager to be revenged for it, although our business was not to fight, but to burn the ships.

We were speedily joined by men from the second boat, and in a few moments the work of destruction was begun. There was forage stowed in the fore-part of the vessel, and thrusting a musket fuse into the heap, we left it to burst into flame, whilst we set fire to the after-part of the ship, whence the flames quickly sprang out. Then a slow match was led to some barrels of powder in the hold, after the heads of them had been knocked out, and having done this we retreated to the boats, leaving the Spaniards to their fate. The wretched men had watched us as we fired the ship, and as their own boats had gone in landing the Spanish soldiers they made a desperate effort to escape in ours. We beat them back, however, and cast off quickly, rowing away from the ship, that was now burning briskly.

I saw some of the crew spring over the side and begin to swim ashore, and then with a loud roar the powder barrels blew up, the great cloud of smoke hiding the flaring hulk for some moments; but as it cleared away the flames were wreathing the tall masts and soaring into the air,

All four ships were blazing now, and the Spaniards would be compelled to retreat inland. The work we had set out to accomplish was ended, and the order given to return.

We reached Brill without losing more of our men, yet only a third came back alive of those who had started on the journey. Captain Marck met us at the water gate, but although the destruction of the Spanish ships was a matter for rejoicing, it seemed as if the fall of the town were certain.

This I heard from the chaplain a little later when I met him, pacing to and fro behind the shelter of a house, for the cannonade from the dyke was more furious than ever, and no reply was possible to it.

"They say that the last of the powder in the town has been used, and it seems true enough," he told me; "moreover, there is talk of making terms with the enemy."

"We shall fare hardly if the Spaniards make us prisoners," I answered.

"So hardly," replied the chaplain, wagging his head, "that I have advised Captain Marck to escape to our ships, and leave Brill to settle its own affairs. But before going I am bent on discovering the treasure that is hidden somewhere in the town. I had news of it from—nay, that matters naught—

Don Guzman knows the secret ; he whom you saw undergoing a little penance on board the *Angel*. I left him hanging by his wrists, now that I recollect," and he shrugged his shoulders.

Whilst we were speaking a rough-looking fellow, whose red hair was over his eyes, came to us.

"So that I am paid for it," said he, "I can save the town. Take me to your captain, and if he promise to give me twenty crowns an' I come back alive, I will drive away single-handed every Spanish soldier on the dyke."

Although we thought the fellow distraught, the chaplain promised him speech with Captain Marck, and through the deserted street we made our way to a house where the leader of the "Beggars of the Sea" was talking with some of the chief men of the town, and he turned angrily at being interrupted.

"Ananias would speak with you," said the chaplain, not heeding Captain Marck's frown one whit. "For Ananias his name must be to make the promise of saving Brill single-handed," and he twisted the red-headed fellow round so that all might see him.

## CHAPTER XX

### MAD LUKAS

CAPTAIN MARCK gave the man a scowling glance, and one of the little company called him by name.

“ ’Tis Lukas, he who is known to be mad,” and he sneered at him.

“ Ay, Lukas the carpenter,” replied the fellow. “ But mad only when the moon is at the full, master. And not so mad then as are some folk who pass for being wise enough to be given office ; but wise or simple, I have a plan to save the town.”

“ And what might it be,” demanded Captain Marck, whereupon Lukas the carpenter pointed from the open casement of the room in which we were gathered, across the river to the country beyond it.

It was no new sight to be seen there. Soldiers in plenty, cannon and stores, and all within the third of a mile from the walls of Brill. On one side of the besieging company ran the river, and on the other a narrow canal led away across the meadow-

land where was the enemy's encampment. Their cannon was planted on the dyke, whence they could fire with deadly aim against the town, and this was being done now without a reply from the walls.

A sluice gate guarded the canal from the river, and the plan proposed by Lukas was to destroy the gate, so that the meadows would be overflowed by the inrush of the river, the level of this being higher than the canal. It was a plan which, if it could be accomplished, would drive the enemy off, but how the destruction of the sluice gate was to be achieved, not one of us could have said.

To have attempted it with men in boats would not have succeeded, for they must have been blown to pieces in a few moments, and there was no other means of breaking down the gate that I could imagine.

"Yet you shall see me hew the timbers, so that they part and break away," said Lukas. "But I must be paid for the work."

"You shall have a hundred crowns," exclaimed a man who had sneered at him at first. "That I promise you, or that you are killed in the task, the money shall be given to your wife."

"Ten crowns will pay her too well for being rid of her crazy goodman," replied Lukas, "if so be that I leave my bones at the sluice gate. If I come back alive you shall give the hundred crowns



into my hand, and being rich, folks will never call me mad henceforward."

So it was settled thus, and for all that those who heard Lukas' mad talk never doubted his perishing, preparations were made for sallying out of the town and attacking the Spaniards immediately after the sluice should be opened. Half an hour or less would suffice for flooding the meadows deep enough to drown every man in the encampment, and the attack was to be made upon them as they crowded for safety on the dyke.

When this had been determined on we went down to the water gate, Lukas having provided himself with an axe. He was to swim across the river, and hew down the sluice gate so soon as darkness fell, when he would be hidden from being seen by the enemy. The destruction of their ships would force them to retreat inland, but everything depended upon the strong right arm of Lukas, the mad carpenter.

It was a moment that I shall never forget, when we stood in a little group upon the quay, whilst he made ready for his desperate task. Only we knew that he was to make the attempt, and we watched him as one who was looking death in the face as he gazed down into the darkling river.

He had divested himself of his leather jerkin, and

in his hand was the heavy axe, which he swung round his head as easily as if it were a toy. Then he glanced back at us for an instant and was gone.

There was a splash, and after that all was silent, but for a few moments we could see him swimming in the direction of the sluice, disappearing in the gloom, and there was nothing more to do but to wait for whatever might come of the brave fellow's attempt.

The firing had ceased by this time, and lights were twinkling amid the Spanish camp, as we had seen them for many a night now. We could hear the faint sound of a trumpet call, but nothing to mark that anything unusual was happening there, and it may have been an hour since Lukas had leaped from the quay before the trumpet rang out again, answered by another call, and in that part of the camp which was nearest to the canal the bright fires were disappearing quickly. I watched the long lines of light vanish, until those which were near the dyke had been extinguished, whilst although the distance from us to the camp was a long one the sounds of confusion in it were heard.

Meanwhile, the company that was to sally out had been waiting in the boats for the order to cross the river and engage the Spanish, who by this time would be crowded on the dyke. Lukas had un-

doubtedly performed his task, and the meadows were flooded, but whether he were alive or dead none knew.

The order was given to cast off, and the next instant we were on our way, every boat being crowded with men. In darkness we landed on the dyke and formed into companies, moving forward to where the Spanish had gathered. On one side was the river, and on the other the flooded meadows, leaving only a narrow space for our advance.

I think the fight on the dyke was the fiercest I had ever taken part in, and because the ground was so uneven and confined, each party fought desperately to hold their position. There was no quarter given, and once a man felt his chance was over, there being no help for it but to press forward, fighting sometimes knee deep in mud as the water splashed on to the dyke, and again on the slippery grass of the slope, sword to sword in a mad fury. Once I had stumbled, but my good fortune saved myself from falling, else I had been choked in the mire ; and then I was thrusting and cutting again, striving to beat off two of the enemy, who were bent on finishing a fallen man, no other than the Reverend Miles Lambert, who had lost his sword, and only that he had gripped one of his foes by the throat he would assuredly have been run through the next instant.

There was a misty moonlight now, and I saw all this as I flung myself on the soldier, as he sought the chance to end the struggle. But the chaplain was using the gurgling wretch he held, as a shield, and the strangeness of the scene, although it happened so long ago, makes me recollect it quite clearly. And then it ended suddenly, leaving the chaplain and myself stranded, as it were, on the dyke, for the fight had passed on into the gloom, and we two were the only living creatures within a distance of twenty yards from it. The two Spaniards were either dead or dying, for my sword had gone to the hilt through one of them, and the chaplain's iron grip had served to quiet the other, who was lying with his face in the mud, without making any effort to move.

"They had made an end of me," exclaimed the chaplain, "unless you had come to us. Never was Miles Lambert nearer death than a moment since. We will talk of this to-morrow again, but there is other to do than that. Hark! That was honest Marck's shout! The Spaniards are running off—we have won the fight, and may St. Gregory aid me, but I will make shift to hurry these bloodthirsty foes of ours."

He was too weak from loss of blood, having been wounded grievously, to reach further, and I stayed

to bind up his hurt. Then the battle was over, and the dyke, whereon not very many minutes before the fight had waged so fiercely, had become almost deserted. But not for long, for whilst I was helping the wounded chaplain to a more comfortable place than a quagmire where we rested, which sank under our weight, Captain Marck and a number of men came running back along the dyke, and I shouted to them. whereupon the captain stopped, asking the reason for this.

“So jovial Miles has had a taste of steel,” he laughed. “Did I not tell thee, thy chance would come? ’Tis a safer business to preach than practise, all the world over.”

“Avaunt!” cried the chaplain. “I have but saved a leech from bleeding me. Whither way now, my merry Jonas?”

“Along the dyke to the boats, and so homeward,” replied the other. “We stay only to destroy the cannon left by the Spaniards, and Brill may sleep in safety then,” and with this Captain Marck disappeared.

With the help I could give him the chaplain got himself to the spot on which we had landed, and in a short time we were being rowed across the river. The fight had been longer than I thought, for everything was too confused for me to remember more

than I have set down, and when the chaplain had got to his lodging I turned away from the house to find a resting-place for the night. As I did so some one came from beneath the porch of a house into the light of a lantern which swung across the street, and I saw it was the Spanish prisoner, Don Guzman, and that he was in a desperate strait, for as I spoke to him he had need to hold my arm to keep his feet.

“I have escaped from the ship wherein I was being kept a prisoner,” he said in a faint voice. “I am sorely wounded, and without a place in which I may shelter myself.”

Now, although he was a Spaniard I could not but feel pity for him, and knowing he would receive none from any of the townsfolk I promised to give him what aid I could. And a sudden thought came into my mind to take him to Mynheer Teufel, who might let him rest himself in the room where I had been imprisoned, which was safe enough from being searched. Moreover, I had a curiosity to see Mynheer Teufel again, so I led the poor wounded fellow thither, and being come to the tower, gave a knock at the door in the buttress which would have aroused the heaviest sleeper, being answered in a few moments by the hangman himself.

“Maybe you have heard of Captain Jonas Marck?” I began. “This is a prisoner of his, and so see to it

that he does not escape you as other prisoners have done."

"Yes, I have heard of Captain Marck," replied Mynheer Teufel in his slow fashion of speaking. "Who hath not? A most venturesome, headstrong man. This is a prisoner of his, say you?" and then he recognized me as I stepped into the light within the doorway.

"Oh, oh! 'tis you, my gay bird," he exclaimed. "You are come back then."

I would have spoken further with him had not the wounded Spaniard suddenly dropped senseless on the ground, and having helped Mynheer Teufel carry him to his room, I took my leave.

## CHAPTER XXI

### TREASURE

MY next business was to find Pretorius, and this I did after some delay. He had escaped any serious hurt during the fight on the dyke, but the chaplain's wounds were exceedingly troublesome, and hindered his moving from the house where he lay.

"Maybe they will not miss my services," said he, "and to speak truly I am more comfortable here than on board the *Angel*. But Captain Marck will be dull without my company, and there is a report of a rich trader being in the narrow seas. So when I am able I shall join him, and what say you and your friend to going with me?"

"I am willing enough," I told him, as we sat together the day following the fight, "and so is Pretorius, but there are Mynheer Brandt and his daughter to be found."

I said nothing of my having succoured the Spaniard, whom Captain Marck had made prisoner, and who had escaped from the *Angel* during the confusion



of yesterday, but after some further conversation with the chaplain, I went to Mynheer Teufel's to inquire about the unfortunate man.

It seemed as if Mynheer Teufel were uncertain whether to be friendly towards me or the reverse, for he was very short in his speech, and did not disturb himself further than to bid me go up the winding stairs to the wounded Spaniard.

"You know the way well enough, I reckon," said he. "The man is lying in the room whence you escaped, and if groaning means anything he hath not long to live."

I climbed the stairs, and went through the trap door; and on the bench where I had slept so many dreary nights lay the Spaniard.

He opened his eyes as I came to him, and it was plain to see that he was exceedingly ill. He told me that the hardships of the war had bereft him of all his strength, and the wounds he had received were past curing. I pitied him so much that I was for fetching a surgeon to his aid at once, but he begged me not to leave him until he had spoken further.

It was a long rambling story he told me, which I will not repeat. Of how, during the campaign in which he had taken part, he had discovered a rich treasure, but fearing to burden himself with it, the

jewels and gold had been buried. How this secret was found out he could not tell, but Captain Marck had learnt it, and the scene I had witnessed in the hold of the *Angel* was but one of the cruel tortures inflicted on his prisoner to wrest the secret from him.

“And now that I am dying,” he said, “I entrust you with the means of obtaining the treasure. You have shown me kindness and will find I am not ungrateful. Take this paper,” and he drew a little package from his ragged doublet. “Read it carefully, and follow the directions contained in it.”

Truth to tell, I paid little heed to what he said, or to the piece of script that he held out to me. The poor fellow was so far gone in the fever which was on him that his speech rambled, and when he began speaking of his home in Spain, and that he could see the place plainly, I delayed not another moment in getting him a surgeon. The only one I could obtain was the surgeon employed by the magistrates to see that Mynheer Teufel’s torturing was stayed in time to save his wretched victim’s life, and it was by Mynheer Teufel’s advice that I brought him to the tower. He was a crabbed old fellow, who asked for payment ere he had seen the wounded man, and got it moreover, for Mynheer Teufel during my absence had searched the Spaniard’s pouch, finding three pieces of gold in it, which he took, telling me

that they might be lost otherwise. One of the coins satisfied the surgeon ; but only after a good deal of disputing, together with a hint of bringing Captain Marck to the tower, which was an empty threat, did the hangman put the money on the table.

Mynheer Teufel might have kept it, however ; for what with the wounds and the fever which consumed him, together with the delay caused by the haggling betwixt the surgeon and Mynheer Teufel, the Spaniard died, babbling to the last of his home and friends ; and after this I returned to the house where Lambert lay, finding Pretorius there also.

Captain Marck had been with them, and the chaplain, who looked the sorriest figure ever seen, for the hair was beginning to grow again, making his shaven pate very like a half-worn scrubbing brush, told me that the *Angel*, together with the *Wolf*, was to put to sea that evening.

“ And I am to be left until such time as I am fit to move,” groaned the chaplain. “ So ’tis farewell to both of you, for maybe we shall see no more of each other. There is a friary in Brabant whither honest brother Anselm went after we were driven away from Canterbury, and I am resolved to be done with being a Protestant. There are more knocks than pence for a chaplain to the ‘Sea Beggars,’ and I am for Brabant, where they will welcome me.”

"But not yet," I answered. "For maybe you will be able to help in finding money to get you food and shelter"; and then I told him what had happened to the Spanish prisoner. I showed him the paper which the man had given me, the writing in it being in a language I could not understand.

Miles Lambert read it carefully, Pretorius and I watching the change that came over his face the while, and when he had done this he gave a chuckle of satisfaction.

"Jonas Marck," said he, "would have rejoiced to read this, but seeing that he is aboard ship, he is not likely to do so. Firstly, there is much treasure stored up; secondly, there are none but we three who know of it; and, thirdly, here are directions whereby it may be found. Verily I could, as it were, preach a sermon in the manner wherewith I preached to those rough dogs aboard the *Angel* when the need was, but 'tis not required of me now. Brother Anselm may eat his dry bread and every friar in Brabant go barefoot, for ever, or I join them. That is to say, until we have found out the truth of this matter; to wit, the treasure that this paper speaks of. And may I lose my head before it is ever shaven again, for the growing of a fresh thatch of hair is very like a penance—not to say worse. 'Twas so when I turned into a Protestant clergyman, I remem-

ber. Yet if this be a false hope of our becoming rich, I shall of a certainty get me into a friary to end my days. For

*Who would not a friar be ?  
That craves a peaceful life ;  
With plenty meat, is happy he,  
That hath no wife, nor strife."*

And the Reverend Miles roared out the ditty in his excitement, forgetful of his wound, until the smart of it caused him to end his singing with a groan.

I begged him to let us know the meaning of the writing, which he did quickly. There was a list of the hidden things : rich vessels of gold, jewels and coins, plundered, I expect, from the different towns which had fallen into the hands of the Spaniards. And of all those who had shared in the treasure, the man whom I saw die in Mynheer Teufel's house was the last. Not that the chaplain took heed of that, for had they all been living the Reverend Miles Lambert vowed that they should not have hindered him from his search for the treasure.

The directions were clear, and it was decided that so soon as the chaplain was well of his hurt we should begin our journey into that part of the country where the jewels and money had been hid. There might be danger in the search, for all we knew, in going to the place which was called Oberdyke, yet the gains

would be worth all the risk. Pretorius and I were resolved to go into Spain afterwards with all speed, and it was the hope of obtaining the means to do this, which we had not then, that made us equally eager as the chaplain to begin the search.

The chest containing the treasure was buried within the walls of a church near to Oberdyke, and the spot was described minutely. Ten paces from the east wall of the church was an altar tomb, and it was in the vault of this that the chest lay concealed.

" 'Tis the tomb of Hicadius Von der Likken," read the chaplain, "and may he rest quietly with a name such as that, for 'tis more than most men could do. Yet quiet or troubled we will be amongst his bones before long, and share the spoil. After that, and reasoning that no interfering, prying, plundering burgomaster, or the like, molest us, we will get shoreward and join the *Angel*, if so be she is not at the bottom of the sea."

"We are going into Spain to find my father and sister," replied Pretorius, "and shall travel by land thither."

"Maybe I will go with you, then," replied Lambert. "Yet 'tis useless to promise anything, for who knows what may happen."

"Did you ever hear of this place which is called Oberdyke?" I asked,

“Never a whisper of the name,” he answered. “But ’tis to be found, doubtless. And so soon as I am able to walk we will start on our travels.”

It was a week before this came about, in which time we had learnt that Oberdyke was a long way from Brill, and situated in a part which had suffered greatly at the hands of the Spanish. Also that travellers were like to meet with many dangers from the number of lawless men wandering without home or means of living. But the prospect of finding the treasure, which would enable Pretorius and myself to go into Spain, whither Mynheer Brandt had been taken, made us regardless of everything else, and when the day came for quitting the town, our hearts were lighter than they had been for a long time.

Lambert, although he limped somewhat, was well of his wound, and having paid for our lodging and keep we three started on our journey with but the slenderest stock of money. Brill had settled down into its usual quietude again, and, save for the ruins of houses burnt during the bombardment, showed itself very little the worse for the troubles it had undergone.

I remember our staying a little when we had got half a mile from the town, the chaplain pulling out the paper from his pouch to consult the plan marked



on it for the hundredth time, and how his jovial face lighted up with a grin as he did this. Then we put all the money we possessed into a little heap on a stone, spreading it out and counting it.

“It will be enough,” said Lambert, but not with a very pleased look. “So that we do not become too hungry, or the road to Oberdyke too long, yet it would be better were the sum a larger one. Twenty marks ! And I have left a goodly sum on board the *Angel*, alack !”

So we gathered the coins together, entrusting them to Lambert’s keeping, and walked on again along the edge of a little stream far into the country, where not a sight of a living thing was to be seen. We had brought a small store of food, and this we ate about midday, when we rested for an hour or longer until a dismal rain began falling that hid the view, and made us hurry onward.

Presently the evening mist began to rise, the rain having mercifully ceased, and we had gained a road, seeing dimly through the gloom what seemed to be a farmstead, and to this we hastened gladly, trusting to find a night’s shelter there. It was not until we came to a tumble-down gateway that we saw that the house was half ruined, and the ground around it strewn with half burnt thatch and broken timbering.



Leaning against the doorpost of the lonely dwelling was a man, who, upon seeing us gazing over the broken-down wall that went round the house, began to nod his head slowly to us, yet without being surprised or pleased, or concerned one whit at the sight of three forlorn creatures, such as we were, coming out of the mist and loneliness to him like three ghosts.

There he stood, with his head going up and down and his round eyes moving to and fro from one to another of us, and we staring back at him, until the chaplain broke the silence.

“In the name of St. Gregory, either speak or stay thy head-wagging,” he roared. “We be three travellers needing a shelter.”

The man’s head went up and down a little quicker at this, and he lifted his hand pointing to the burnt roof, his face broadening into a smile, but he still held his peace.

“So if it please you,” continued Lambert, “we will come in, and what we eat you shall be paid for.”

The head stopped at last, and the strange figure began pondering, as it seemed, whereupon the chaplain lost his patience.

“He is not deaf nor blind,” he said, turning to me, “but why he stays to consider, when I offered him payment, shows him to be infirm of mind. So

we will settle the matter for him," and with this we went through the gateway into the house, the man drawing aside for us to pass him.

"Shelter," he said, speaking his first word. "You should have come here a month ago for that. Yet a little remains over the hens' house, and that you are welcome to."

"What has happened, my good friend?" asked the chaplain.

"Many things," replied the man. "Such as the killing of my cattle, the eating up of my stores and the burning of my house. The Spaniards came this way."

I think his troubles had made him mad, and we did not question him further. There were food and fire, however, and when he had provided us with these the man went back to the door, leaning against the post, gazing upon his ruined farmstead until darkness hid it. He did not speak to us again, but in the morning, when we had given him payment for our lodging, he smiled at the sight of the money, and as we walked away, stood nodding his head at us whilst we crossed to where the roadway showed whitely in the morning sun.

The plan set down on the paper helped us not at all, but misled us rather, and at last we began to doubt the story of the hidden treasure. But the

chaplain kept up a good heart, and made merry over a dozen things that would have caused us to be down-cast. Sometimes we went hungry for long hours, and were like to remain so, if it had not been for Lambert's ready wit. The last of our money had been spent in a town called Kirchem, on a meal of coarse food, and where the next was to come from I knew not. It was then that his help was the more welcome, and I remember his bidding us stay for his return, saying he would be back in a brief while.

"How is this journey of ours to end?" said Pretorius, stretching himself before the fire of the room in the mean little inn, "and when are we to be on that other one in search of my father?"

"So soon as Oberdyke is come to," I replied. "Yet I begin to think there is no hope of finding either money or jewels there."

We talked in this style for some time, and became at length so melancholy that we were fain to cease. Miles Lambert had been gone an hour or longer, and I got up from my chair to look from the casement along the narrow street if by chance I might see him returning. And this I did, for he came from a turning, carrying in his arms an ill-fastened bundle.

He entered the room a few moments later, and his hearty laugh made the rafters shake as he told us his adventures.

“ I have been with the brethren,” he said, holding his forefinger up, as he had done in the inn at Antwerp, where we first met. “ But whist of that, my sons, though if I am a Protestant on the *Angel* ’tis no reason why I should not be a friar in Kirchheim. There is luck in two strings to one’s bow, and my second string led me to the jolliest company of holy brothers in Holland, to whom in a few well chosen words I explained the hardships I had undergone, and the fear of worse, or I got their friendly help. One brought me this, and another that; here a cheese and here salt fish; a woman’s coif, though in the name of St. Anthony I cannot guess the good of that; and furthermore the use of a cherry wood rosary, seeing I had not one at my girdle, and the saints alone know the trouble it was to explain how that was. But I gave them reasons good for everything, and a song, too, that Brother Titus, as he was called, played the tune of on his viol de Gamba until the watch-dog at the buttery hatch howled aloud. And lastly, my sons, I have found Oberdyke, or rather the road to it, which is very much the same thing. And that Oberdyke is but two leagues from Kirchheim brought such floods of gratitude to my soul, that I joined in vespers, for all that I am a Protestant parson, and small blame to me, say I, when I had eaten of the holy friars’ food, and drunk of their wine,

to say nothing of having borrowed ten marks from the lodge porter, poor innocent creature.”

The chaplain was out of breath by this time, ending his speech with another hearty laugh. He emptied the bundle on the table, and showed us what the kindly hearted friars had given him. There was an old hat, a doublet of tawny-coloured flannel, some broken victuals, and other things which I have forgotten. But better than anything else were the directions by which we were to reach Oberdyke, and the news that the place was scarce two leagues from Kirchem. With the money he had borrowed from the lodge porter, we paid for a supper and bed, and by daylight started upon the last stage of our journey.

## CHAPTER XXII

### IN OBERDYKE

I CAN see the chaplain now, although it is many a long year ago since that morning, when we stole out of Kirchheim through the pointed gateway of a tower, which stood at the foot of a bridge. He had gathered his friar's robe over his arm, which he wore for lack of other clothes, those having been left on board the *Angel*, and he had become possessed, yet how I know not, of a pair of horseman's boots, so that it was small wonder the market women we met in crossing the bridge gazed and laughed at him. Pretorius and I were on either side of his broad figure, and maybe we looked as strange as he, for our clothes were rent and stained, mended in a dozen places, and our boots sadly broken.

Heedless of the rough market people, the chaplain shouldered his way amid them, and having come to the other side of the river, we turned to the right hand, where a narrow path led through the meadow land. Then we saw in the distance the tall spire

of a church, a few cottages standing here and there near it.

“Oberdyke,” exclaimed the chaplain, spreading out his hand in the direction of the spire. “But it behoves us to be cautious. We may very easily be mistaken for what we are not. So go warily, my sons. Some one may be at their devotions, and Hicadius Von der Likken can wait our visit to him a short time longer.” So, after reaching the church, we remained at the entrance until assured by the great stillness within that we might safely enter without being observed.

Coming out of the sunlight, the church seemed well-nigh dark, and the silence gave me a feeling of awe. Rifling a tomb was not such a simple affair as I imagined, and as we crept along the aisle, the strangeness of our errand made me forget the rich prize that was within reach.

“’Tis a noble old church,” said the chaplain, looking around at the different objects which could be seen dimly. “And there are a wonderful many tombs. But there have been rough hands at work, and if this be Hicadius, he has been robbed of his nose.”

We had reached a tomb whereon lay the effigy of a man in full armour. Half of the face had been broken away and the thumbs of the hand, whilst

part of the tomb itself, that had a pair of chubby angels carved on it, showed signs of having been loosened.

But it was the tomb of Hicadius Von der Likken, and drawing aside the loosened stones some steps were seen leading down to the gloomy vault, into which the chaplain peered, kneeling.

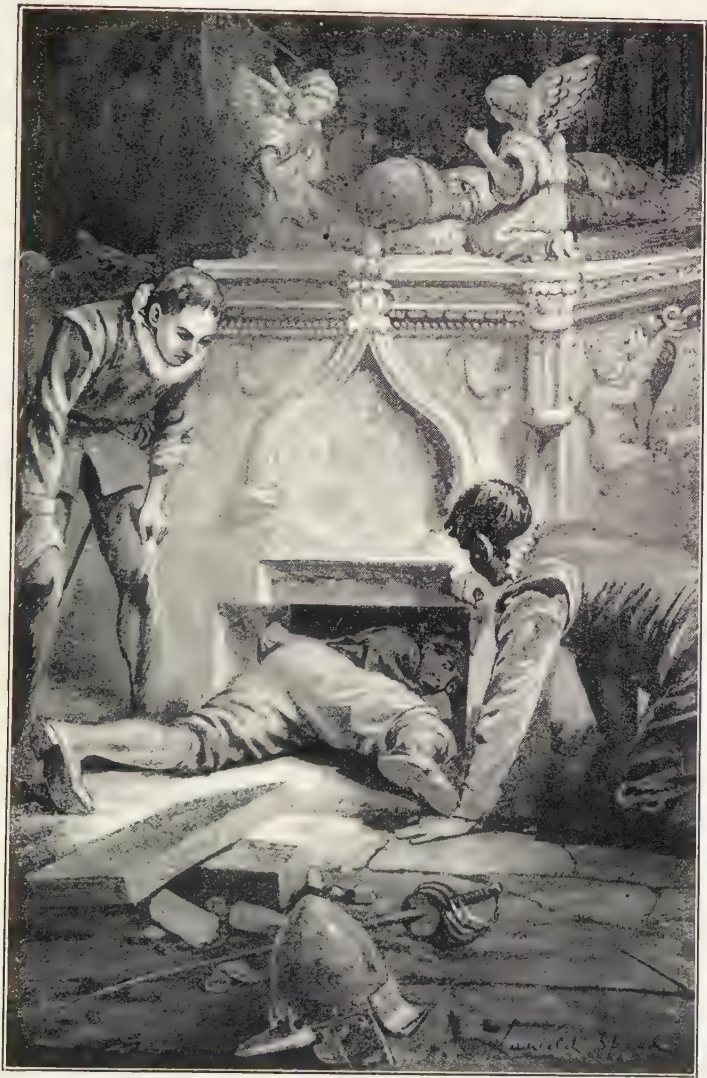
"Though 'tis a business not to my liking," he muttered, "this disturbing of a worthy man's last resting-place, it must be gone through. Jewels and gold are not to be found every day, and therefore——"

I stopped him suddenly by a touch on the shoulder. There was the sound of footsteps outside, and the next moment they had stayed, as though some one had guessed our errand and was listening. But they went on again, dying away in the distance, and so eager was the chaplain that he could wait no longer, but crawling head foremost he disappeared down the steps, bidding me follow.

The passage was scarcely wide enough for his stout body, but he struggled to the bottom of the steps, and we found ourselves in the vault.

Pretorius struck a spark into his tinder box, and when he had kindled a match the light showed us two rows of coffins, placed on stone shelves, and of all the gruesome sights this was one of the worst





CRAWLING HEAD FOREMOST HE DISAPPEARED DOWN THE STEPS.



I had ever seen. Some of the coffins were broken and crumbling, and one of them had been displaced, so that it projected from the shelf, ready to fall at a touch.

But of any sign of the treasure there was none. The floor of the vault was stone, and there were no traces of its having been disturbed. The sides also were of solid masonry, and we stood looking at each other in the light of the reed candle with a curious dismay.

"Look at the paper once more," said Pretorius; "maybe there is something to guide us to the spot."

"There is not a word in it that I have not read a dozen times," growled the chaplain, his voice being strangely muffled. "Ten paces—Hicadius Von der Likken—seventeen steps from entrance—and so forth. I know them by heart, and here we are, no nearer getting to the jewels and gold than if we were aboard ship," and he held the piece of paper close to the candle so that it was almost scorched.

Then something showed amid the writing which had not been there before. The rude drawing of a coffin whereon was a cross marked, and as the paper became hotter, so did the drawing grow clearer. It faded quickly as Lambert drew it away, but we had discovered the secret at last, for the coffin a-tilt

on the shelf had a rude cross marked on its side.

"If this means anything," exclaimed Lambert, "'tis that the treasure is hidden in the coffin. Help me to lower it to the floor, my sons."

He put his broad shoulder to it, Pretorius and I steadying the other end, and we were in the act of lifting the coffin when we heard a door open and the patter of sandals crossing the floor overhead, then a voice reciting something, and Lambert dropped his burden, the heavy fall resounding like a thunder-clap through the church, and the droning voice suddenly stopped.

"This ends the business," exclaimed Lambert, blowing out the candle. "They were at service, and Hicadius Von der Likken has disturbed them. We shall be discovered, and what will follow that is easy to be guessed."

He had hardly spoken the words before the white face of one of the priests was seen looking through the opening of the tomb. I saw his startled look, and then another face over his shoulder. There were some words uttered which I did not understand, and for the space of five minutes some kind of ceremony went on.

"They are exorcising Hicadius' troubled spirit," whispered the chaplain. "'Tis a thing I have done

myself—they will fasten the tomb up securely, and we shall be buried alive.”

The horror of this made us forget the prize we had come after, and when the exordium was ended true enough the opening was closed. We could hear the broken stone being replaced and the retreating footsteps of those whose devotions we had disturbed, and then a deadly silence followed.

How long we remained before moving I cannot say, but it seemed to have been hours before Lambert groped his way to the steps, and we followed him. Until then it were as if the search for the treasure had been forgotten, and it was Pretorius who reminded us of it.

Lambert had his ear to the side of the tomb. I had re-lit the candle that burnt feebly in the close air, and he held up his hand.

“They have left one of the brethren to watch over poor Hicadius,” he whispered. “I can hear him telling his beads.”

Then we went down the steps again to the spot where lay the fallen coffin. It had burst on the floor, and as I lifted a piece of the broken woodwork, a small iron-bound box amongst the crumbling bones was seen, and I held it up in the light, feeling it heavy in my hands. Whether it were the treasure or no we did not wait to decide, but by this time the

air was so close that we could scarce breathe. Lambert thrust the box beneath his arm, and we waited not a moment longer.

With a vigorous push we threw down the stone which had been replaced in the side of the tomb, and first through the opening went the chaplain, sprawling on his knees into the chancel, and I heard the terrified shout of the watching brother, who was speeding towards a side door as I came from the vault.

Then we were out of the church, walking hurriedly past the cottages, and doubtless we should have made good our departure from Oberdyke, if at that moment some soldiers had not suddenly emerged from behind a wall and barred our way.

## CHAPTER XXIII

“JONAS MARCK, A-HOY ”

NOW I doubt not but what the Reverend Miles Lambert could have satisfied the officer who was at the head of the little company that we were peaceable travellers and harmless, but no such explanation would avail with the holy fathers, whose devotions we had disturbed. For, headed by a venerable priest, they came unexpectedly at our heels, so we were between two fires and for a moment nonplussed, looking first at the soldiers and then at the brethren, wondering what might happen next.

The old priest held up his hand as if proclaiming attention, whereat the officer drew back a few paces, and waited until the other had spoken.

“This is no trifling matter,” began the priest. “Come hither, brother Eusebius,” and he beckoned to the brother whose watch over the tomb had been disturbed.

Brother Eusebius came forward, eyeing the chaplain from head to foot.

"This is no spirit," said the elder man, "such as you described as coming headlong into the church, but a man."

Eusebius appeared to doubt still, for he shook his head.

"Therefore," continued the other, "he shall be questioned regarding the unlawful disturbance he hath created, he and his companions also, and we will hear more anon. We will deliver them over to the secular arm," and he nodded to the officer.

Lambert drew aside a little, and he made a sign for Pretorius and me to get close to him.

"I know this secular arm," he whispered hastily. "It will go hard with us if we are laid by the heels. Strike when the moment comes, and then make for the fields yonder."

He said this in a second of time, and I saw him tuck the box of treasure under his arm as two of the soldiers stepped forward and the order was given to make us prisoners. Lambert showed no sign of resisting, but as the first soldier was about to grasp him, he sent out his brawny fist like a flash, and the fellow went sprawling back, overturning brother Eusebius, and at the same instant I struck the other soldier, sending him reeling.

Never was such a hubbub heard in Oberdyke as arose then, but we did not stay to join in it. I



know that the brethren shouted louder than the soldiers as we ran, and that was the last I heard of them. Over the fields, after leaping a narrow stream, at one time ankle deep in mire, and the next feeling the hard ground under our feet, we fled, the chaplain's robe streaming behind him, and not a hundred yards away followed the soldiers. Then a bullet rang past my ear, and another had carried away the chaplain's broad-brimmed hat, as he sprang across a pool of water, his bristly head foremost.

The light was waning quickly, and maybe for this reason we escaped the bullets which seemed to me to be coming like hail, the haste with which they fired preventing the soldiers from taking a true aim. We had gained on them, moreover, making for some trees which were in the distance.

But Lambert was spent almost, and the wound he had received a little time since opened afresh. He could run no further, and as I glanced at him I saw that he had nearly fallen, so I placed my arm beneath his, and we ran on together as best we could.

How we reached the trees I cannot say, for the chaplain needed all my aid and the help of Pretorius also to gain the spot. By the time we had done so our pursuers were close upon us—six of them, who had outrun their companions, and as we disappeared

into the thick grove they were not fifty yards off.

We stopped running, for Miles Lambert could not go further until his breath returned, but this was the wisest thing to do, for if we were to fight, our chance of success would be greater amid the trees than in the open ground.

It was nearly dark now, all around us being indistinct, except where, near by, ran a stream which showed up in the gloom like a gray band across the meadows. There was a black spot on it which was moving towards us, and I could make out the form of a boat and that it was full of men. I pointed it out to Lambert as we stood waiting for our pursuers, and he gave a groan.

"We shall be taken in front and rear," he said huskily, "and end our days miserably."

There was no time for him to say more, for the soldiers were upon us the next instant, calling us to surrender, and as we did not answer, the order was given to seize us.

It was six to three, and what with running and the wound he had received, the chaplain was in no trim for fighting. But he was likewise in no mood to be made prisoner, and with his back to a tree vowed to sell his life dearly.

Yet what could three unarmed men do against

such odds as opposed us ? Our fate seemed certain, and although we did the best we could to resist, a few moments longer and the struggle would be over. Lambert had thrown the man who had attacked him, and I was holding at bay a fellow whose angry eyes I could see, even in the gloom, from beneath his casque, whilst Pretorius was fighting manfully beside me. And then there came the trampling of many feet amongst the leaves, and the glint of a lantern which shone upon the strange scene, and added to the confusion of it

“Jonas Marck, a-hoy.”

The chaplain's voice rang out with a sound of triumph and joy. “Jonas Marck,” it repeated, and the next instant our assailants had become mingled with a number of men, who came in some wonderful and unexpected way into the thicket of trees. And foremost of them was the captain of the *Angel*, holding the lantern over his head, so that the light was full in the chaplain's face, and at a little distance were the muffled sounds of blows and voices. These passed away, and I knew that the dangers that threatened us had vanished too ; yet by what means Captain Jonas Marck and his men had come in the extremity of our peril seemed the most marvellous thing of all.

“How now, chaplain ?” demanded the captain,

finding voice at last. "I left you in Brill, laid by with a wound. What witchcraft brings you here?"

"Never yet was I ever so glad to see your face as now," exclaimed the chaplain; "though how you came and why passes my understanding. We had been clapped into prison if you had not appeared, and in brief you have rescued us at the moment when we had given up every hope."

We had moved from the trees as he said this, and come to the stream where lay the boat in which Captain Marck had arrived. Being in need of provisions a dozen of his crew had made an expedition a little inland, and were returning to their ship, when, for a reason Captain Marck did not give us, he had landed. The sounds of voices had attracted him to the spot where we were found, and it was an easy matter to drive off our assailants.

"We are not two miles from the coast," he told us, "where lies the *Angel*. I will hear the rest of the story when we get aboard," and in a short time we did this, climbing on deck, overjoyed in having escaped from our dangers.

And during these, the Reverend Miles Lambert had held tucked beneath his friar's robe the box of treasure, to gain which we had risked life and liberty, and when an opportunity came next day, he, Pretorius and I gazed for the first time on our prize.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### RICHES

THE lamp which swung from a beam overhead sent out a faint gleam upon the contents of the box, and as Lambert opened the lid a sudden flash of brightness shot out, whereupon he gave a long indrawn breath, holding up his hands in astonishment.

For there lay, coiled in a velvet case, whereof the upper part had been torn away, a chain of glittering jewels, that flashed in the lantern light as he drew them up.

“ I have not seen the like of these since I knelt at the shrine of St. Thomas à Becket in Canterbury Cathedral,” he said ; “ and the worth of them is more than I can guess at. Beautiful ! ” Then his fingers went into the box again, drawing out a golden crucifix.

“ This, too, is fairer than I have ever seen. Beautiful ! ” and he laid it beside the jewelled chain, tenderly, as if fearing to bruise it. “ Here are more jewels—orient pearls, soft as moonlight. Beauti-

ful!" and he drew another long breath. "And here is a paten of gold, dinted, 'tis true, yet heavy enough to satisfy a usurer. Beautiful!"

There were other things, costly ornaments and rings which we took from the box, and the sum of them would enrich each of us. There were gold coins also, which Lambert counted in a whisper and gloated over like a miser—seventy pieces in all, and as this left an odd coin when they had been divided, we settled the matter as to which of us should possess it in the manner of children choosing their partners at play, and the chaplain won.

When we had fully satisfied our eyes with the sight of the glittering jewels, the box was securely fastened again, being entrusted to the keeping of Lambert, and after this Pretorius and I went on deck, looking across the wide expanse of waters.

The *Wolf* was sailing in company with the *Angel*, and we learnt from one of our crew that since the seizing of Brill, the ships had been engaged in a desperate encounter with a Spanish war vessel, in which the *Angel* had lost a great number of her men. We were short-handed, therefore, and Captain Marck's journey inland was to procure men and provisions, if possible, as I have already said.

Yet although we had escaped from our enemies and won a rich prize to boot, my heart was heavy

when I thought of Mynheer Brandt. Pretorius spoke but little of his father, but I knew that he shared in my fears, and now that our chance of getting to Spain had gone for the time, his heart was as sorrowful as mine. We were in this dolorous state when the chaplain joined us, his hearty face beaming with pleasure as he spoke of the voyage being ended soon, when he would quit the sea and settle in comfort ashore.

“For truth to tell,” he said, “the *Angel* is more like a sieve than a ship, and I doubt me whether she would weather a storm. Our stores are nearly to an end, and Captain Marck is minded to run into the nearest English port, come what may of it. Then the ‘Beggars of the Sea’ may find another chaplain or sail away without one for aught I care, and we will get us to London, where our treasure will be turned into honest money.”

“I shall remain with Captain Marck until such time as I can reach Holland,” replied Pretorius. “Then if Mynheer Gerard Dickers is to be found, he and I must have a reckoning,” and although I did not say the same words, I meant the same thing when I answered.

It was the third day after our rejoining the *Angel*, and during that time she and the *Wolf* had cruised hither and thither on the look-out for the big Spanish

trader, of which Lambert had spoken to me in Brill. How news of her had reached Captain Marck I cannot say, but so certain was he of falling in with the ship that his crew were kept busy in preparing to attack her. But never yet was a vessel in worse trim than the *Angel*, for her sides were riddled with shot holes and her upper works so damaged that they were past mending. Her sails were more patched than ever, and her rigging spliced and knotted in a thousand ways, yet in spite of these things every man aboard was eager for fighting. There were stowed below goods enough, so that the value of them were equally shared to give every man the means of living at peace to the end of his days, yet we had scarcely enough food to satisfy our hunger, and the crew was becoming mutinous.

The *Wolf* was in as evil a plight as we, and as she lurched along heavily, the water could be seen streaming through her gray, blistered sides, so that it seemed a miracle that she kept afloat. But the weather continued fair, and although the two ships looked like the beggars they were, there were stout hearts aboard who feared nothing, and were ready to dare all, so long as a cannon could be fired or the timbers of their crazy ship held together.

This then was the condition of the Sea Beggars when, as day broke of the morning of the fifth day



after our rescue, the look-out sighted two ships, and in a moment every one on the *Angel* had come on deck.

Pretorius and I followed the chaplain into the bow, where Captain Marck stood scanning the horizon beneath his brown hand. Only the top-masts and sails of the strangers could be made out as yet, but there was a look of fierce satisfaction in Captain Jonas Marck's remaining eye.

"What do you say, my gallant Jonas?" exclaimed the chaplain. "Are these 'the ships we are keeping the sea to meet?'"

"If it is not the *Santa Lucia* I am most grievously out of reckoning," replied the captain.

"And what of the other?" asked Lambert. "It seems to me we shall have a busy time and a double task," but Captain Marck did not answer him.

In a little while the strangers were well in sight, and from the mast-head of one of them streamed out the banner of Spain, a double tier of port holes proving her to be a war vessel convoying the slow sailing trader, and as we drew towards them, their spread of white sails and gay colour made our ships look shabbier and more mean than before.

Yet although the risk of seizing the *Santa Lucia* would be a harder matter than had been expected, Captain Marck had no thought of relinquishing it,

That she was worth more than all the prizes won yet, he knew of a certainty, but that a Spanish man of war was to be her convoy had not been reckoned upon, and as we drove through the water it was plainly to be seen that our business was known.

The wooden bowl was too well understood to be lightly disregarded even by a vessel of war, and the "Beggars of the Sea" had gained a name for daring, recklessness and courage which made them feared far and near.

The *Wolf* was alongside us, and from the quarter-deck of the *Angel* Captain Marck gave her captain the plan of battle. Both vessels were to attack the war ship at the same moment, and cross her fore and aft, after delivering their broadside. There were some other directions given, and then Captain Marck stepped down into the waist of his ship, where every man stood at his post beside the clumsy cannon carriages, powder and shot being put in a line betwixt the main and foremast.

We were within a quarter of a mile of the *Santa Lucia* and her convoy, and in the bow of the *Angel* a grim-visaged seaman, stripped to the waist, bent over the long cannon that thrust its muzzle through a jagged porthole, holding a lighted slow match in his hand as he took aim. As yet the Spanish had paid no heed to us, and the gunner glanced up at

Captain Marck, waiting for the word to fire the shot that would speak our purpose better than a thousand words would have done.

Nearer and nearer came the two gallant ships, and the distance was so short between us that I could see the faces of the Spanish gunners as they watched, and then the roar of the saker broke the silence. I saw the shot strike fair upon the Spaniard's gilded figure-head, and the next moment a puff of grey smoke broke from her side, followed by the crash of splintered woodwork, as the fore topmast of the *Angel* fell with a tangle of cordage and torn sail dragging alongside.

The *Wolf* was passing us, like a hound loosed from its leash, and was alongside the Spaniard, discharging a broadside as we laboured after her, for the shot had hindered us, and in a few moments the battle began raging furiously. Yet because the cannon of the Spaniard were so much higher than ours we escaped hurt, save in our rigging, which was further damaged as we passed her stern. This we raked, the shot crashing through the galleries and windows, for our guns were aimed upward, Captain Marck trusting, I think, to destroy the Spaniard's rudder and so render her helpless.

The wind seemed to die away as we rounded the Spaniard, eager to send in another broadside, the

*Angel* drifting close to the high quarter of the ship, and here it was that we lost a number of men. I cannot well describe the scene, for it was so hidden by smoke, and the confusion was so great, that only a dim memory remains of it. I was on the quarter-deck, helping to work the cannon there, and with me were Pretorius and three or four others. The chaplain's voice rose above the din, and holding on to the rail a little apart was Captain Marck, who had been wounded a few moments since. I recollect that Lambert had seized a thin line and bound it around the captain's arm above where the torn flesh had laid bare the bone, the blood springing in jets until the close grip of the line stayed its flow.

Then a shower of bullets came hissing amongst us, striking two of the seamen, one of whom fell across the saker in a strange helpless fashion, and the other, holding his hand to his rent side, sank to the deck in a welter of blood.

"Clear away from her," shouted Marck, whose face was deadly pale. "Cut adrift aloft there," for the crosstrees of the mainmast had become entangled with the Spaniard's upper works, so close were we to her. And during the time that this and other orders were being obeyed our seamen ceased not a moment in serving the guns that sent in broadside after broadside, which were returned by

a hot fire from the Spaniard. Ahead of us the *Wolf* was attacking the bows of the big ship.

We had cleared from her at last, and as the *Angel* hung on the wind in luffing, a shot from the Spaniard came aboard us a little forward of the quarter, passing across the deck, and leaving death on either side its path. It was an awful sight that followed, and for an instant or two there fell a silence amid the seamen as they hauled on the braces. Then the *Angel* had swung round, coming broadside to the Spaniard, and it seemed as if our destruction was certain. For so heavy was the fire and deadly, that our men were falling every instant—shrouds and running tackle were being cut, so that the sails spilled the wind, as sailors have it, and with a crash as of thunder a shot struck the cannon at which Pretorius and I were working, and the next instant I was hurled from the quarter-deck into the sea.

When I came to the surface the *Angel* was passing under the Spaniard's stern again, and at a little distance lay the trading ship, *Santa Lucia*, her side crowded with men watching the fight, and in despair of being saved otherwise I swam towards her. It was not until I did so that, I became conscious for the first time of being wounded.

As I lifted in the heavy sea, swimming slowly

by reason of my smarting side, I could see the group of spectators of the battle standing on the high poop of the *Santa Lucia*. Then I had sunk in the trough of the waves, hearing the boom of cannons as from a long way off, and being borne upward again the smoke and fire of the fight were seen, but so mistily, because of the blinding spray which lashed my face, that everything seemed unreal to me. And after that I was being carried down—down into darkness and strange peacefulness beneath the waves.

## CHAPTER XXV

### SAVED

WHAT first I remember after this was the sound of a mumbling voice beside me, as if some one were at his devotions, and as I turned my head it was to see the chaplain counting his beads. It was so gloomy that only his face and hands were distinct, and for a moment or two I let him go on with his paternosters and Ave Marias without interrupting him.

I was lying against the knee of a timber, what light there was coming from a distance, and not a sound other than the chaplain's muttering disturbed the silence. Then my memory returned suddenly—the recollection of sinking, and the knowledge that by some miracle I had been saved.

“What place is this?” I asked, wondering at the sound of my own voice and that it was so faint. But it sufficed to cause the chaplain to spring to his feet, and thrust the beads away out of sight.

“Heaven be praised, my son,” he cried, “that you are alive enough to speak. For I thought you to be dead, and—maybe you heard me reciting the prayers for the departed?”

“I saw you telling your beads,” and as I said this a broad smile came across his face.

“That was because I am done with being chaplain to Captain Jonas Marck from to-day henceforward,” he replied. “There are more peaceful methods of earning one’s living than roving the sea;—but whist about the beads, my son. We are amongst those who might doubt my sincerity and cause trouble.”

“Now tell me where we are, and how I came here,” I said impatiently.

“Easy, my son. There is no need for eagerness—you and I have time enough for talking,” and he moved a little into the gloom so that I lost sight of him until he returned, bringing a drink of something which seemed to give new life to me. Then he seated himself opposite the thick timber, and told me what had happened.

“When you were sent overboard,” he began, “I was with one of the crew in a boat alongside the *Angel*, striving to plug a shot hole. I saw you fall in the water, and we quitted our work to save you. Twice I missed seizing you, but the third attempt



succeeded. By that time we were a goodly distance from the scene of strife and bloodshed—the *Angel* seemed to be sinking, and the *Wolf* was somewhere on the larboard quarter of the enemy. You were lying lifeless in the boat, and in a word the confusion was so great that when I was hailed by some one I had no senses left to save you or myself from being taken prisoner. We are on board the *Santa Lucia*, and bound for a prison for aught I can say.”

He went on to tell me that Captain Marck and his companions had sailed off, crippled worse than they had ever been, the Spaniard being unable to pursue them. More than this, except that these things had happened some hours since, he knew nothing.

We were talking thus when two men came from the doorway of the place where I lay, one of them carrying a lantern, which lighted it sufficiently for one to see that he was richly dressed, and that he had a kindly face. The man following him was bending to whisper something, I think, to his companion, and then, with a surprise that caused me to rise on my elbow to gaze at him, I recognized Gerard Dickers.

Neither of them spoke to me nor to the chaplain, and Dickers turned to the elder man.

"This is the fellow," he said, pointing to me. "I knew him at once when he was brought on board. A dangerous fellow, too, who had a share in the taking of Breda, and is deserving of a rope if ever a man was."

The other, I discovered a little later, was the captain of the *Santa Lucia*, who nodded his head, but whether he agreed with Dickers or was doubtful about hanging me I cannot say. He was satisfied, however, in scanning my face again, and then he said something to the chaplain, who answered him in Spanish. It was not until he was turning to quit the cabin, that Dickers deigned to address me, and he did not wait for my answer.

"I vowed to be revenged upon you," he hissed out. "It is a dangerous thing to cross my path, you will speedily discover," and with this threat he followed the captain to the door.

Lambert went with them, and being left alone I became so disconsolate that I almost regretted being saved. I had lost all those whom I loved, Pretorius, Mynheer Brandt and Anna, and I was in the power of a vindictive enemy. Moreover, the uncertainty as to their fate troubled me more than I can describe, whilst although it seemed a very trivial matter by comparison with this, everything I possessed had gone too. That I should never see

my native land again I felt assured, and by the time Lambert came back I was so downhearted that I did not care to speak further with him.

“ ’Tis no use to despond, my son,” he said cheerfully, “ and if they mean to hang us, we are not to die hungry. Here are meat and drink from Captain Esparto’s own table, given into my hands by the blackest negro out of Ethiopia. And ’twas a goodly sight that same table, with the captain’s passengers seated at it.”

There was something in the manner of his saying all this which made me curious.

“ I did not know the *Santa Lucia* carried passengers,” I said. “ Are there many of them ? ”

“ Only three,” he answered. “ That evil looking Dutchman who came here a while since with Captain Esparto was one of them. And the two others—steady, now, whilst I tell you—the two others are Mynheer Brandt and his daughter, for I heard their names spoken.”

For a moment I believed myself to be dreaming. That Mynheer Brandt was aboard the *Santa Lucia* was news that filled me with such keen joy, that I was almost beside myself, and was for rushing out of the cabin, but Lambert stayed me.

“ They have put a sentry outside our cabin,” he exclaimed. “ There is no passing that way for

you, unless you are tired of living. But wait until we have talked the matter over."

"Does Mynheer Brandt know of my being here?" I asked.

"He and his daughter were below when we were brought aboard—out of danger from a stray cannon ball belike. They know nothing, I should say."

"Though it is risking my life I will see them," I cried.

"And that you shall, though without the risk of being shot, my son," replied the chaplain. "I have devised a way, yet first I must learn the whereabouts of Mynheer Dickers' cabin."

Now luckily Lambert was free to come or go as he pleased, and he very quickly discovered that Mynheer Brandt was lodged in that part of the vessel which in an English ship is called the "coach," and is beneath the quarter-deck. To reach this it would be needful for us to traverse the length of the ship, the cabin which we occupied being in the fore-castle.

"'Twould be a simple matter," he said thoughtfully, "to get to Mynheer Brandt's cabin were it not for the guard outside the door yonder. —But maybe two ducats will blind him—alas! they are the last I own, save a box of treasures that never

more shall we see—and I will make a bargain with the ducats.”

He went from the cabin, and I waited for his return eagerly. What terms he made with the guard I did not know, but he beckoned to me a moment later from the door, and I followed up the narrow stairway, feeling the cold night breeze on my face and then we were in the waist of the ship, with the great sails bellying out overhead, and hearing the hum of the wind through the shrouds.

The moon was full, and we crept along towards the quarter-deck, in the black shadow of the bulwark, until a spark of light was seen through the little eye of glass in the door of a cabin, and at a sign from Lambert I stooped listening at it.

Mynheer Brandt was speaking to some one, and I waited no longer. I heard him move quickly upon my tapping at the door, and the next moment it was flung open. Anna had risen from her seat also, and her clear blue eyes were fixed on me as I stood in the opening.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### IN AMSTERDAM

THOUGH Mynheer Brandt was for a moment so surprised that he could only stare at me, Anna found her tongue quickly, and I tried in a clumsy sort of way to explain the cause of our unexpected meeting, forgetful that I might be seized and carried away at any instant. Lambert was standing with his broad figure filling the doorway, looking on at the scene in a fatherly fashion with his twinkling grey eyes, until he stepped inside the cabin and closed the door behind him.

I will not repeat all that was said, for that would be to tell again what has been already told, and when I had ended my story, Mynheer Brandt described the reason for his quitting Antwerp.

Dickers has proved a good friend to us," he said, "and it is with his advice that I am on the *Santa Lucia*, which will land us in a Spanish port, where I hope to live at peace."

Not a word had either he or Anna asked of Pretorius, but the reason for that I understood. It was the dread of knowing he and they might never meet again, I am sure, and it was for the same reason that I held my peace concerning him.

"I heard as much as this in Antwerp," I said. "But so far is Dickers from being your friend, Mynheer Brandt, that it would be a happy thing if you had never listened to him."

"I had no one else to assist me in arranging for this long journey my daughter and I are taking," he answered. "What proof have you of his being a double-dealer?"

Truth to tell I had none, for all that I was certain that he was a villain, and it angered me in a manner to think Mynheer Brandt should trust him.

"But we need not speak further of Dickers," he said; "you and your safety rather need to be thought of." And Anna gave me a look at this that brought a flush to my cheek.

"Firstly, Captain Esparto shall be told that you must be treated as a guest. He is not willing to risk the danger of voyaging without protection, and seeing that the vessel of war has gone in pursuit of your friends, he is determined to put into port. Let me advise your getting back to England with all speed."

"But do not let me go alone," I answered. "England will offer you better protection than you would find in Spain, and Dickers must have known of that. He has some base motive in advising this voyage, Mynheer Brandt."

I was waxing eloquent, the words coming readily, when the cabin door opened and Dickers entered, who upon seeing me drew back a little, a black frown coming into his face.

"Do you know this fellow's character, Mynheer Brandt?" he demanded. "That he is deserving of being hanged?"

"That is a strange reward for one who has fought on the side of your native country, Dickers," replied Mynheer Brandt. "He was at Breda, when the fortress was captured."

"Nevertheless," retorted Dickers, "he is a traitor," and when he said this I lost what small command of temper was left me and was on the point of answering him when Lambert stopped me.

"Leave Mynheer Dickers to me," he said softly in my ear. "He can do you no harm on board, and I will have a word with him when we land."

Anna had withdrawn when Dickers came into the cabin, and we went in a body to Captain Esparto. To him Mynheer Brandt explained my unfortunate position, and the captain, who would have done



anything so that his peace was not disturbed; gave orders that Lambert and I were to have the use of a cabin until we reached land.

I was free to move as I would now, and the next morning Anna and I were together on the quarter-deck. She had been told of Pretorius, and the doubt which was in my mind as to his being alive. I dared not hope that he had been preserved, and Anna's grief was pitiful to see. Then Mynheer Brandt learnt the sad news, and in a way which I have no words to describe this seemed to bind us more closely together than before. He made me promise not to leave them, and I gave my word to obey him in all things as his son.

Dickers kept apart from us during the time we remained on board the *Santa Lucia*, which was a day longer. Then Captain Esparto put into Amsterdam, and after bidding him adieu, Mynheer Brandt and Anna went on shore, leaving Lambert and myself to follow them when we had procured a change of clothing, for although to be "Beggars of the Sea" we were willing enough, to go garbed like beggars in the busy streets of Amsterdam was not to be endured.

Mynheer Brandt had been generous in supplying me with money, and having this in my purse, Lambert and I searched for a dealer in clothes. We

found one readily, yet what costume the chaplain should decide upon was a difficult matter.

“For it seems to me that I am neither priest nor chaplain, landsman nor seaman. Fighting being an abhorrence to me, I cannot look the soldier, and of trade I am innocent. I have worn a friar’s robe, a parson’s gown, a tarry jerkin and a shipman’s boots, and neither became me. So how say you, son Thomas, as to the kind of dress I should don ? ”

“Be a plain burgher, your reverence,” I said, and I might have laughed if I were not too sad for mirth. And like a sturdy burgher Miles Lambert was attired as he strode out of the dealer’s booth, and as good-humoured as though he had gained, instead of lost, a fortune.

We had promised Mynheer Brandt to join him in the inn, where he and Anna were to lodge, and I was eager to do this, but Lambert, declaring he had some important business on hand, begged me to go with him to the burgomaster.

“For in that box which Providence has snatched from our grasp, as one may say, there was something more than either you or your friend Pretorius Brandt (rest his soul) knew of. Nay, ’twas neither jewels or gold, but only a written paper which had gone unobserved until I came to look in the box again.”

That the paper he had found contained import-

ant information I felt sure by the way in which Lambert spoke, yet he would not tell me more then. Stopping a stranger who was hurrying through the street upon urgent business, he demanded to be directed to the burgomaster, and in spite of the other's eagerness to be on his way, Lambert held him by the button, until the man had told him twice over the direction in which we were to go.

It was at the burgomaster's house that Lambert bade me wait whilst he spoke with him, and after a full hour had passed, together with my patience, he came down the steps of the house in high good-humour.

Even then he would not tell me what had gone forward within, and maybe I was not very desirous of knowing, for were there not Mynheer Brandt and Anna to be seen again, and I hurried Lambert to their lodging.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### ADIEU, MYNHEER DICKERS

AT the entrance to the inn, my companion, making some excuse for leaving me, continued his way down the street, and I entered the house, being directed to the room which Mynheer Brandt had hired. Going to this I opened the door expecting to find him there. Instead of seeing Mynheer Brandt, however, it was Dickers I saw, standing at the window that overlooked a garden, and alone. He was dressed richly, and there was a scornful curl on his lip as he turned his head on my coming in. I would have held my peace had he not addressed me.

“You are either wondrously foolhardy, or wondrously foolish, my friend,” he began, “to show yourself here. ’Tis no great concern of mine that you should meet the punishment of your deed, yet nothing is more certain than that you will find yourself in a prison, unless you quit Amsterdam with all speed.”

“Doubtless you have laid some lying charge

against me, as you did at Breda," I replied. "But it is a hard matter to believe your word, Mynheer Dickers, either for good or evil, and this being so I am content to remain here."

He shrugged his shoulders, but I saw the anger my answer roused in him.

"Furthermore, I intend staying in Mynheer Brandt's company until he bids me leave it," I continued. "It will be my particular business to save him from harm such as the falseness of friends and the like."

"You have a glib tongue," retorted Dickers jeeringly, "yet it will not save you. Maybe you doubt this, or that I am warning you without cause. Listen then. It was my first business upon coming ashore to make known to the burgomaster that a dangerous traitor was in Amsterdam; meaning yourself. Englishmen are not greatly loved here, and though you escaped me the first time you will not do so now," and he laughed quietly at what he mistook for my dismay at hearing this.

But I will own to my being disquieted at it. My arrest, for all that I had done no wrong, would separate me from Mynheer Brandt, and a score of vague fears troubled me.

"And what happens to traitors?" I demanded.

"The least is imprisonment, but if word of mine

and the hate I bear you have weight, you shall be hanged," and he hissed out the words venomously.

There followed a little silence, and Dickers turned to the window again, looking out without heeding my presence until he started round, and there was a scornful triumph in his voice.

"You chose to doubt me," he exclaimed. "Look from this window, for the soldiers who will arrest you are crossing the garden."

I made a movement as if to escape from the room, but in a moment he had sprung to the door, drawing his sword. Mine was out too, and as the blades clashed together a loud knocking came, whereupon he thrust his weapon into its sheath, and moved from the doorway.

"I will leave others to rid me of you," he said, and as he spoke the soldiers were in the room.

The Reverend Miles Lambert was with them, whispering to the leader of the little company; and behind them were Mynheer Brandt and Anna, whose face was grave with wonder, and such a bitterness came into my heart that I had no power to speak. Then one of the soldiers came forward, placing his hand on my shoulder.

It seemed to me that Lambert's laugh was out of place just then, for he had roared out until his face became ruddier than ever.





HE HAD REACHED THE GATE, BUT ONLY TO FIND IT LOCKED.



“Avast and heave to,” he cried, using the seamen’s phrases as if he were a seaman himself. “You are mighty eager to seize your prisoner, but make certain, firstly, that you snare the right one. There he stands,” and he pointed his big forefinger towards Dickers.

For the space of a minute, maybe, there was a dead silence, Dickers gazing at the chaplain as if the burly figure were a gazing stock.

“Mynheer Henrik Dickers,” said Lambert. “For your name is writ in full upon the letter you sent to the Spanish commander with secret information. And though you be as slippery as a Schiedam eel, you cannot escape.”

With a suddenness that prevented the soldiers from seizing him, Dickers had gained the window, bursting through it with a crash of broken glass and splintered woodwork, and was in the garden, followed by the soldiers. He had reached the gate, but only to find it locked, and I saw him turn, facing the soldiers.

His sword was out, and making a furious thrust he ran the foremost of them through the neck, and the man stumbled into an ugly heap, over whose body Dickers fought for his life. Another of the men had fallen, and for all that Dickers had planned my destruction, his bravery won my admira-

tion. Traitor and liar though he was, he did not lack courage, and until his strength was exhausted he held his foes at bay.

And from the window Mynheer Brandt, standing apart from the others who watched there, looked on. What his thoughts were I cannot even guess at, and when the end came he covered his face with his hands as he quitted us. Anna had gone before that, and amid the breathless silence we gazed upon the unequal fight.

Dickers had taken a stride forward, wounding another of his assailants, and, as he recovered position, one of them ran in upon him. I saw his hands upraised, the dripping sword falling from his grasp, and amid the fallen men he dropped, lying motionless until we, who had gone to him, were beside his blood-stained body. Raising himself on his elbow he tried to speak, but the words were unuttered, and then his drooping head was raised for the last time. For the last time his gaze met mine, and the look of hatred was there as he sank back dead.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### JOYFUL NEWS

TWO months had passed since that eventful day in Amsterdam, and Mynheer Brandt and his daughter were back in their old home in Antwerp. I was with them, and at Mynheer's earnest request Lambert had returned with us, he living in the house of old 'Lisbeth, not very peacefully, perhaps, but most of his time was passed in the *comptoir* of the merchant's house, where some business went forward in a sluggish fashion, as of old.

I knew now the story of Henrik Dickers, and maybe in dying by the sword he had been saved from a worse death. The letter which Lambert found in the treasure box proved Dickers to be a doubled-dyed traitor to his country, and the chaplain's visit to the burgomaster led to the traitor's arrest. But it needs not that I should explain that more fully than I have done, and from the day we left Amsterdam Henrik Dickers' name was never uttered by us.

We arrived at Antwerp safely, and here I was told all that had happened from the night when Gianibelli's volcano destroyed the bridge. Count Hohenlo had sent a spy, who, after a hazardous visit to Kalloo, he having swum beneath the ruined bridge, returned with the doleful news that all the hope of relief which the Antwerpers had entertained would never be fulfilled. "Runaway Jacob" had failed in his duty, and through him all Gianibelli's plans had come to naught, save in making a breach in the Duke of Parma's bridge.

Yet a great number of Spanish officers, men of importance, too, had been killed by the explosion, and amongst these was the Marquis of Roubaix, but notwithstanding all this the Duke of Parma continued certain of subduing the city.

In Antwerp all the quarrels, disputes and diverse counsels continued as heretofore. The guilds and colleges wrangled and spoke ill of each other; the "Peacemakers" were as quarrelsome, the "Silent Men" as noisy as ever they were, and more so, perhaps, and every day the hardships of the siege grew more vexatious.

And the day after our returning thither, finding Mynheer Brandt's house secure, but more lonely than it had ever been, for Pretorius would never again be seen in it, was my sorrowful thought—the

next day as I sat in the deserted *comptoir*, lonely and sad, I heard a voice without that caused me to start from my seat.

“Hinder me not, my good woman,” went the voice, and mingled with it was ’Lisbeth’s, as if to oppose a stranger’s entrance. “I am well beknown to Mynheer.”

It was the voice of Poot Kinkers, and I opened the *comptoir* door to admit him. His body was stouter than ever, and his clothes finer than I remembered his usually wearing, whilst an iron cap sloped over his eye and a long sword clanked at his side.

“I had given you up for dead long ago,” I cried, heartily glad to see him, and Poot’s face lit up with a grin.

“Didst not know I was back in Antwerp?” he answered. “Well! well! that is a strange thing, when all the city is talking of Poot Kinkers and his adventures. There is a scheme afoot for making me commander of a—yet it matters not to name the company, which is not formed as one may say. Still——”

“And Cornelius Vondel?” I interrupted eagerly. “Did he escape from Kalloo?”

“Speak not of that remnant of a man,” he answered as disdainfully as his iron cap would let him.

“He is of small account. ’Tis of me, Poot Kinkers, the city rings : how I fought my way through a whole regiment of fierce Spaniards—a company of ten, more or less to speak the truth, though it might have been a whole regiment, mark you ; how I swam the Scheldt, and brought tidings of the greatest importance to the city ; how I withstood a bald-headed carabineer on my way to Boerinne, and shot with the carabineer’s own weapon several of the enemy approaching on a raft ; and finally came at peace home to my house, where, being nearly dead with cold, I hastened, after St. Aldegonde had vaunted my deeds, sending Frau Kinkers straightway into a fit, she taking me for a ghost. Worse still than that was to come, however. For who, think you, found I sitting at the fireside in my kitchen ? Why, no other than that threadpaper traitor, Cornelius Vondel, drinking a cup of schnapps from a flagon which had been put aside for a birthday merry-making. So I looked mightily askance at him, whereupon he went away without so much as uttering a——”

“There you speak untruthfully, Poot Kinkers,” and at that instant Cornelius Vondel himself burst into the *comptoir* in time to hear the last of Poot’s speech. “Oh, thou boaster and vainglorious onion grower. Did I not stay to explain to the frau

that I would make mourning clothes for your children without profit, now that their father was dead? Tush! for your glass of schnapps, that were but so-so as to the taste of the drink. You must know that Cornelius Vondel is some one of importance now, having been the first to reach Antwerp after the destruction of the bridge. I am no boaster or I would repeat the praises poured out upon me by St. Aldegonde and the magistrates. It was I who warned everybody to prepare for whatever might happen to them. I made a speech at the Guild meeting which will be ever remembered and——

“But how did you get back to Antwerp?”  
I asked to stay his tongue.

“By fighting my way through a whole army down to the riverside; where, finding a boat, I stepped into it, and shook my clenched hand in the face of the Duke himself. Then I rowed to Antwerp, seeing a ragged creature dragging along the shore, who was a market gardener I should have told you,” and he drew himself up, looking at Poot Kinkers insolently.

Mynheer Brandt came in just then, or I verily believe there would have been a desperate falling out between Poot and Cornelius. Yet I was overjoyed at seeing them safe and sound, and how they really

made good their escape mattered little. But Johan Schim had been killed, together with others of the prisoners ; yet, having no one to grieve after him nor pelf to leave, his death was declared to be rather a comfort, Johan being a quarrelsome fellow in his cups.

And now I come to what I have always regarded as one of the most surprising and happiest things that happened amid the many in which I took part.

It was towards the close of a dull afternoon that, with the Reverend Miles Lambert for company, I sat in the *comptoir* of Mynheer Brandt's warehouse, and a very disconsolate pair were the chaplain and myself. Though he had given over repining for the loss of the treasure, I know that it had been a sad trouble to him, and all his hopes of providing himself with a home had vanished. He often came to the *comptoir*, and on this occasion seemed to have lost all his merriment as he sat looking gloomily into the brazier of glowing peat which warmed the apartment. And as we were talking together quietly, Poot Kinkers came to us, as he often did when his frau was more than usually ill-tempered. He drew a stool up to the brazier, sitting twiddling his thumbs in the warmth, and his gaze following the smoke up the chimney.

"These be most marvellous times," he said after



a long silence. “ ‘Koppen Loppen,’ as they call Runaway Jacob, has had his throat cut by the Spanish in the battle on the dyke of Kowenstyn. A plague on these Spanish, say I, for my onion beds are overflowed through them,” and then he was silent for another space, we not heeding his talk, the news being a day old.

“ There was talk of some sea-robbers coming into the river,” he went on. “ Maybe you have heard tell of them and the name they call themselves, ‘Beggars of the Sea’ no less, a rascally, thieving set of rogues by all accounts. Dost know aught of them ? ” and he turned to the chaplain.

“ Let me consider a moment, good Poot,” replied Lambert gravely. “ For now that you speak of these men, I seem to remember hearing their name. ‘Beggars of the Sea,’ was it, but never that they were rascals ? ”

“ That is because you knew nothing of their wiles and wickednesses,” answered Poot, and I had work to keep from bursting into a laugh. “ Now if I were to meet one of the same ‘Beggars of the Sea’ I would give him to his face even a worse word than plain rascal.”

“ The saints forbid,” said the chaplain piously, “ for you are not an old man, Poot. Too young to die and leave a widow. ’Tis said, if I recollect

aright, that the 'Beggars of the Sea' are somewhat quick to answer."

Poot said nothing more for a moment, but continued twiddling his thumbs.

"Yet I am brave enough," he burst out quite suddenly. "Nay, I will prove my words if there be the chance to do so. I was at the quayside, where business took me an hour since. Business, I say, in spite of the frau's taunts that I only went to gossip at the *Three Storks*; for mark you, I had business which took me to the tavern, so if Cornelius Vondel spreads a rumour to the contrary--and who more likely than he?—I pray you deny his story. Well, to end mine, you shall be told quickly. 'Twas at the *Three Storks* that a tarry-faced man was speaking of a vessel named the *Angel*. Worms and maggots! friend Lambert, what evil spirit has made you overset the brazier?" and Poot Kinkers was skipping about, holding first one of his shins and then the other, the burning peat scorching them. "What for kicked you the fire about in this fashion?"

"Get on with your tale," roared the chaplain, stretching out his big hand to quiet the jumping little fellow.

"Tale, quotha!" replied Poot. "'Tis no tale either, but the sober truth. I was drinking a glass of schnapps when I heard it, for the weather is

monstrous damp, and the frau may say what she chooses, but a hale man is better than one shaking in an ague fit any time in the week. Four acres of vegetables need some health and strength in the tending, to say naught of an inrush of——”

Lambert had seized Poot by the neckband of his jerkin, and the gardener was near to being choked before he wriggled himself free.

“What about the *Angel*? Is anything known of her?” shouted the chaplain.

“Only this,” replied Poot, wrenching free and getting out of reach. “That a ship of that name, and carrying a flag whereon is the figure of a wooden bowl, is newly come to anchor in the river—there is a one-eyed man, who was rowed from her to the very stairs of the *Three Storks*, as evil-looking a man as any between Antwerp and Spain, who called for a flagon, and swore at the drawer in words not to be repeated by a respectable market gardener. Moreover——”

But we never heard Poot Kinkers’ “moreover,” for Lambert and I were out of the *comptoir* in an instant, and hastening down the quiet street on our way to the *Three Storks*.

Poot had spoken the truth, for in the bright cold sunshine fluttered from the masthead of the *Angel* the tattered flag of the “Beggars of the Sea,”

not a hundred yards from the quay. And as we came to the *Three Storks* Captain Jonas Marck's gruff voice was heard, and Lambert, pulling open the lattice of the casement of the room wherein the captain sat, thrust in his head.

"Jonas Marck, a-hoy." It was the shout that the chaplain had given once before, I remembered, and this time it was answered so lustily that the rafters shook. Then we were in the room, and with a joy and gladness such as I cannot describe, I saw Pretorius Brandt standing beside Captain Marck.

It seemed as if everybody were talking at once, Miles Lambert's face, ruddy as the sun seen through mist and wreathed with smiles, beaming at Captain Marck, whilst Pretorius and I, the first of the excitement spending itself, standing a little apart, watched the pair of old comrades.

"'Tis nothing less than a miracle that you are here alive and hearty," cried his reverence. "I had moaned for ye, Jonas Marck, a score of times, thinking that you were quiet at last beneath the sea. How fared the *Angel* after I quitted her?"

"Nearer to her destruction than ever she was," replied Captain Marck, "for the Spaniard was set on sinking us. The *Wolf* hung on to her, bulldog fashion, and presently, having cleared the tangle of

the foremast, the *Angel* bore down on the enemy. By good luck the *Wolf* and I had so crippled her lower guns that they could do us no further harm, and as for those on her deck, we heeded them nothing, for their shot went clear over us. So we raked her again and again, being handier in tacking than the Spaniard, who was at last so mauled that she drew out of the fight. The *Santa Lucia* had sailed away, and so all my fine plans had come to an end."

"And what did you do then, my gallant Jonas?" asked Lambert. "How went it with the 'Beggars of the Sea'?"

"We fetched port, crawling thither half full of water, leaving the *Wolf* to go to the north," answered Captain Marck. And getting into safety we patched and mended, knotted and spliced, besides getting a new mainsail and jib, paying honest money for them, moreover."

"Another miracle," exclaimed Lambert. "But I am glad to hear it. Dost remember the Antwerp butcher? I know such a miracle as that would have been exceeding joyful for him. Alack, poor man, I have oftentimes wondered whether——"

"Ay, the butcher of Antwerp," interrupted the captain, and there came a sort of glitter in his one eye. "What of him, padre? I ordered none of his goods"

"The least said the better," replied Lambert. "We were most marvellous hungry, remember, at that time. Speak no further of this same butcher. Where goes the *Angel* now?"

"To sea this night," answered Marck. "So let us aboard forthwith, your holiness."

It were as if the chaplain held him off, for his hands were outspread. "Verily, my son, you must c'en sail without a parson this cruise," he said, "and betwixt you and me, Jonas Marck, I doubt whether one will be missed overmuch. I am now on dry land, and in no mood for quitting it."

"You spoke differently at Harwich," retorted Captain Marck, fixing a look on him.

"Maybe if this were Harwich my speech might now be as then," answered Lambert. "Wouldst have a sermon from me?"

"Nay," cried the other hastily. "The saints forbid, my merry parson, but there is that aboard the *Angel* more to your liking than preaching, I warrant ye—prize money, to wit."

It was wonderful how Lambert changed his tune at this, and in a few moments we were all in the boat, which was moored to the steps of the *Three Storks*, and were being rowed to the *Angel*.

She was shabbier than ever, and so ragged that I doubted her seaworthiness. But the new mainsail

and jib had been bent, and her guns polished anew, whilst the crew were full as many as I remember. We went into Captain Marck's cabin, where he paid Lambert his share of prize money, which after all was but a small sum.

"Sail with me again," said the captain, "and I promise you that you shall have as much gold as you can lift, *parson*."

"I left as much on board," replied Lambert disconsolately. "But 'tis useless repining at the loss of my treasure."

"Nor need to do so," exclaimed Pretorius, "for the box is safe ashore. I carried it thither when we landed from the *Angel*."

The chaplain gave a screech of delight, and never did news come more welcome. He and I were no longer poor, but my real joy could not be increased, even by knowing this.



## CHAPTER XXIX

### IN BECCLES AGAIN

I HAVE always remembered the weeks that passed after Pretorius' return home as amongst the happiest time in my life, and when a letter came addressed to me at Mynheer Brandt's house from my uncle, Mr. William Rede, inquiring after my welfare, and stating that an urgent matter compelled me to go to England, I read it with a sort of dismay and honest regret at the thought of parting from my friends.

But it was a mandate not to be disobeyed, and in some measure I was reconciled to it by the promise of the chaplain to go with me. Moreover, I was resolved to return to Antwerp at the first opportunity, and at bidding adieu to my friends, Mynheer Brandt spoke of our separation being only for a short time, words that comforted me not a little. Anna and Pretorius cheered me with the hope of our soon meeting again, and I carried with me the remembrance of Anna's bright eyes and tender voice when the hour came for us to part.



Lambert and I sailed from Antwerp in a ship belonging to Mynheer Brandt, and we arrived at Lowestoffe without anything hindering us. I had told the chaplain everything concerning myself, and the reason of my leaving Beccles so hurriedly, and as we drew near the coast I will own to feeling somewhat chary of landing. I kept the fear to myself, however, and hoped for the best. Lambert was in high good humour as we sighted shore, and his face beamed with pleasure when at last anchor was dropped in port.

“The sea is a dangerous place to traverse, my son,” said he, “when men such as honest Jonas Marck—rest his soul if he has gone to his rest—are afloat on it. I was in tribulation every moment after going aboard the *Angel*, for though my old friend Jonas is honest enough and fair-dealing, he might have been covetous of our prize. ’Tis one thing to be a penniless man, and another to carry riches under one’s cloak—there are risks to be run then that a poor man is happily safe from.”

“I think the treasure was never out of his thoughts, for he spoke continually of it, and the things he was minded to do when the jewels were changed into money. This would be best done in London, however, and until such times as that might come about, he was to stay with my uncle at Roos Hall,

for I had taken upon myself the duty of inviting him thither. It was less than a plain reward for all that the Reverend Miles Lambert had done for me, and I was certain that my uncle would offer him a ready welcome. His reverence had stood my friend too often for me to ever forget his services, and the greatest thing of all that he had done was the saving of my life when the *Angel* fought the Spanish war vessel ; but although I assured him of my uncle's friendship and hospitality, he was in a manner dubious of accepting them, and I asked him the reason for this.

" I am uncertain as to what I am," he replied, " and therefore undecided as to the properest manner of comporting myself. Say I am a Protestant. What follows but behaving as such ? Say I am a friar, and truth to tell, that were more to my liking than the being fed with grooms and scullions, as is the usual case with the chaplain in a great household. Well, argue me a friar ; and there comes the chance of Miles Lambert being clapped in prison. Therefore I am at the parting of the ways, as one may call it."

" But my uncle's is not one of those great households you speak of," I answered, " and he will care naught whether you go to mass or morning service."

" Then 'twill be best for me to be neither Protestant nor friar," he replied, brightening his look.

“And that is the cheerfullest thing I have ever decided upon since my old cronies and I were driven out of our friary in Canterbury. My certie ! what a time that was to remember ! for I doubt whether the like was ever seen. There was Brother Alrys, with an armful of pots and pans ; Brother Ephroditus, who carried a flock pallet, he being afflicted with a tertian ague and granted the indulgence of a softer bed than the rest of us ; Brother Anselm, who was tormented by an aching tooth that day when we were driven out, and so forgot to carry anything else off with him ; and beside these half a score more of the brethren burdened with odds and ends. We stood awhile in the roadway disputing as to what was best to be done, until I lost the slender stock of patience, which was all I possessed in the cold, wide world, and when that was gone I departed out of Canterbury to starve. For the eating of remnants, as one might truly call the food given me out of charity, was no better than starving. So I turned my coat and took ship with honest Jonas Marck, that man of wrath, who is one of the kindest souls—for a heretic—ever met with.”

Miles Lambert beguiled our ride to Roos Hall by gossiping thus, and he roared aloud when I reminded him that his talk of heretics was ill-fitting to him.

“Then there shall be no more of it,” he cried, and we urged our horses into a trot, for the chimneys of Roos Hall were showing over the hill brow, and in a short time we had drawn rein at the door of my uncle’s house.

“The saints be praised!” he exclaimed fervently, “that we are come to the end of the journey. “For a cheery fire and a good meal are two of the welcomest things after a long ride in a bleak wind. I have learnt the meaning of that blessed word ‘Comfort.’ There was less of ease aboard the *Angel* than I care to remember.”

Ephraim Spendril, more bent than formerly, was at the door, and his grizzled face broadened out with a grin as he greeted me. It was not Ephraim’s way to be surprised at anything which might happen, but he stared curiously at my companion.

“*Pax vobiscum*, my son,” said Lambert, spreading out his hands as if blessing Ephraim, and then he corrected himself as it were. “That is to say, good day to ye, and the words came to my lips by accident,” and he winked at him.

Ephraim pursed his lips, and nothing more was said, but he drew me aside as we entered the house.

“He and his *pax vobiscum*,” he whispered behind his hand. “What sort is this merry gentleman you’ve brought with you home, Master Thomas?”

“One of the best and kindest of men, Ephraim,” I told him. “I had never come home, or he had been less than this. But how have things gone on in Beccles since the day I rode away from Roos Hall?”

“There was a mighty to-do, so ’twas told me, after that business of the Fen wardens choosing,” he answered. “We had the constable to the house, and a search made, but you were safe at Lowestoffe by then.”

I was so fearful of hearing more that I did not question him further. There was a great doubt in my mind as to whether I was any safer now than when I left Roos Hall, but the danger had to be met, if danger there were. Then my uncle had come into the hall, greeting us heartily, and the Reverend Miles Lambert was speedily at ease regarding his creed, Mr. Rede being of the Romish religion. So his reverence doffed his Protestantism, and seemed the easier in his mind for doing so.

And happier still was I to learn that the affair for which I had quitted Roos Hall so hastily was no longer any danger to me. The man whom I believed to have been killed in the brawl in Beccles was alive and lusty—and I might walk the streets there now without any fear. My uncle told me, more-

over, that after what threatened to be endless quarrels and bickering, he and the Beccles folk had made peace touching the Fen business, but all that seemed of so little moment to me, that I am afraid I paid but scanty heed to his explanations. My thoughts were far away just then, and the memories of those whom I had left in Antwerp were foremost of them.

By my uncle's advice, the treasure which Miles Lambert had brought with him through so many hazards was entrusted to a worthy goldsmith to be turned into money. I forget what the full amount of this was, but Lambert's share sufficed to make a rich man of him. He purchased the small cottage which he had so often craved for, and settled down within a mile of Roos Hall, speedily gaining the friendship of his neighbours, and as for his religion, I doubt whether that troubled him more than it did his boon companions, which, to tell the truth, was not one whit.

My first visit was to the armourer, Zadoc Sandys, and coming to his booth I stayed my footsteps, listening to the tinkle of hammer on anvil as I had heard it many a time before. The wreath of blue smoke coming from the workshop chimney told that trade was busy, and upon entering the booth I saw Amyas Meyrick hammering at a corslet—the

same merry-faced Amyas as of old, and I went up to him unperceived.

“So they have not hanged thee, Amyas,” I said, and at this he gave a shout of surprise, dropping corslet and hammer to grasp me by both hands.

“Thomas Rede,” he exclaimed, “that I thought never to have seen again. Nay, I am not hanged, though I came nigh to being caught. But I hid awhile, and the hue and cry died away, so I came back to work at last. To think you are here again—wonders will never cease. And so glad am I, that though there is work enough for two apprentices, and little time for doing it, the work must wait now. Not another stroke will I do this day,” and he burst into a laugh. Then we went from the booth into the town, and along the riverside, as we had done many a time in the old days, and as we went I told him the story of my many adventures.

Zadoc Sandys was in his little room behind the workshop when we returned, and his droning voice was to be heard as I remembered hearing it formerly, when he puzzled and groaned over his strange business.

“He is drawing a nativity for the churchwarden,” said Amyas, a little scornfully I thought. “Hark at him. Yet though I put but small credence in his

moons, suns and stars, they have a way of telling the truth about one's future. The constable of Beccles found them truthful at any rate, for there were tribulations of no trifling sort that came to him. Alack! he is another creature since his wedding, and the folks say that Mistress Riderhood rules the roost. I say that she ought to wear the scold's bridle, and the constable would agree with me if he dared. So maybe these nativities that my old master draws have some virtue in them."

There was no gainsaying this, nor did I wish to dispute about it. The meeting with my old companion was too happy a one for that, and I left him with the promise of seeing him again the following day.

So in this fashion did I come back to Beccles, but my stay was not to be for long. Three weeks later I was back in Antwerp, entrusted with some important business by my uncle.



## CHAPTER XXX

### ADIEU

**A**LTHOUGH my uncle would have had me return to Beccles when the business upon which I had gone to Antwerp was done, I remained with Mynheer Brandt for several months, during which time he settled his affairs in order to quit Antwerp, dreading the consequences of the Spanish rule there. It was at my uncle's earnest wish that Mynheer Brandt came to England and settled within a short distance of Roos Hall, having bought himself an estate. My uncle, whose health had declined, had given his business into my charge, Pretorius Brandt becoming a sharer in it with myself, and for three years or longer nothing occurred to interrupt our peace. Anna and I had been married a year, when our quiet lives were disturbed, as indeed was the case with every one in the country, by the news of the King of Spain's project for invading England, and that the mightiest fleet which

ever put to sea, the Great Armada, had been seen off the coasts of Cornwall.

It is not my intention to repeat the history which others have told, and that in a far better way than could I, of King Philip's disastrous defeat, nor to repeat the story of the loss of his vaunted fleet. No words of mine could increase the glory that surrounds the memory of the brave captains and their men, who drove the ships of that Great Armada before them as though the Spaniards were but a flock of sheep ; yet because amid the numberless deeds of daring performed at that time, a certain Captain Jonas Mark was not idle, but on the contrary exceedingly eager and alert in harassing the Spanish, I will narrate the last of his exploits, that had been so many and of varying results to him.

The fleet under command of Medina Sidonia had been driven through the Straits of Dover as far as Calais, where the Invincible Armada was to be joined by the Duke of Parma with a great force. The descent upon England was to be made when Farnese and his soldiers reached the ships ; and from the heights of Dover a hundred and thirty great vessels of war, the most heavily armed in the world under the flag of Spain, could be seen.

But the Duke of Parma, for all his impatience to join Medina Sidonia, was hindered from doing so

by a fleet of small vessels that hovered like gnats at every point of egress from Holland, where the Duke then was. Amongst the galleons, sloops and fly boats patrolling the shore was the *Angel*, ill-found and ill-provisioned as of old, with her crew of half-starved seamen on the look out for prey. All this I heard from the lips of one of her crew, who told the story to Miles Lambert and myself but a month later, and the chaplain's face flushed and paled as he listened.

Then for a reason I know not, Captain Marck was sent by one of the Dutch admirals, Van der Moor by name, though that matters not, with an order to Lord Howard, who with Drake, Frobisher, Hawkins and the other gallant English captains, was biting the heels of the Spaniards, as one may say, to Calais roads. And here it fell out that Captain Jonas Marck did a deed that won him renown, and but for an evil mishap would have brought him wealth too.

His errand done, Captain Marck was for returning to the sandbanks of the Flemish coast, when a sudden storm arose that created great confusion amid the Spanish fleet, the ships of which were awkward sailers, and the flagship of the galleasses, one of the biggest of the splendid vessels of the Armada, the show ship of the fleet 'twas said of her, began drifting ashore, until at length she struck upon

the harbour bar in shallow water, so that the English ships were not able to follow her.

The great ship lay well in sight of the spectators on shore, who lined the quay in thousands, and a jeering shout went up as a vessel, named the *Margaret* of London, which had gone in pursuit of the galeasse, grounded at a distance from her, but behind the *Margaret* sailed the ragged old *Angel* with her captain, wary as a fox, and more skilful in handling her than the ablest seamen afloat that day. There in full view of the two fleets and the landsmen on the shore and quay of Calais, clear out in the light of day, were the three ships, two of them hard and fast on the sand, and the tattered, shot-riddled "Beggar of the Sea" watching the great galeasse grinding her forefoot into the sandbank.

The Spaniard carried forty piece of artillery and a crew of three hundred soldiers, together with four hundred rowers, and it was in the face of these odds that Captain Marck called for volunteers to seize the stranded galeasse. It was an Englishman who stepped forward the first, Dick Thompson by name, and all honour to him; and of the brave company, not a hundred in all, more than half the number were my own countrymen.

Into the boats they got and were speedily alongside the *Capitana*, the Spanish galeasse, and Captain

Marck, who led the expedition, called to her commander to surrender, receiving naught but a haughty smile of derision as the Spaniard looked down at the boats from the towering side of his ship.

Then another Englishman, named Wilcox, went scrambling up the galleasse's forechain, yet only to fall dead as he reached her deck, shot through the head, and the boats opened a volley upon her that disconcerted the Spaniards mightily, who hid behind their bulwarks, not returning the fire, and for an hour or longer the boats pelted them with shot, picking off a goodly number, in full view of the spectators ashore and afloat. Captain Marck had lost a few men, and was preparing to board, when the Spanish commander seemed to suddenly gather his courage together, and calling to his soldiers made as if to leap down into the boats, but a lucky shot put an end to him, and as he fell dead his crew hid themselves again. In a trice Captain Marck and his men were aboard her, dealing out such destruction, that though the "Beggars of the Sea" were outnumbered sevenfold, the cowardly Spaniards surrendered their ship.

"My certie!" exclaimed Lambert, smacking his lips. "I would have given a year of my life to have been there. Tell us what followed."

"There was plunder galore, rich goods and food,

money and jewels," went on the narrator, "to say naught of the value of the galeasse, which was snatched from our hands, for a finicking Frenchman rowed off to the galeasse, claiming her as a prize to the King of France. Captain Marck swore and grumbled at the injustice of the thing, and was for throwing the Frenchman and his followers overboard, but being a wary man as I have said, he parleyed with him, seeing that the galeasse lay within hail of a French fortress, the guns of which could have blown her out of the water before one could wink twice. All he could do was to pillage the gay Frenchman and his companions of their rings and chains.

It was a hardship to lose the galeasse, but Captain Marck returned to the *Angel*, laden with plunder, and a name for gallantry he can never be robbed of.

It was the year after this that Captain Marck quitted the sea, settling down within hail, as he termed it, of his old chaplain Mark Lambert, and many a merry time have they had together. They are our guests at each Yule tide, when Roos Hall is joyous with company, and the Reverend Miles Lambert is the merriest soul there, spite of the increasing infirmities of age.

Of the others whom I knew, Poot Kinkers and Cornelius Vondel, they too have grown old, but not a whit less quarrelsome than in former days. I

see them always when my affairs call me to Antwerp, and each time I recall the memories of the days when we shared so many troubles and dangers together.

Twenty years have sped since Captain Jonas Marck hauled down his flag and lowered the wooden bowl from his splintered and spliced masthead. My uncle's death made me a rich man, and 'tis my office now to settle the choosing of the Fen wardens. Mynheer Brandt never returned to Antwerp, and Pretorius is wed to an English lass at last, so that I doubt whether in broad England there is a happier family than we.

And ofttimes I am one of those who, sitting in the ingle nook of Miles Lambert's cottage, or beside his glowing hearth, listen to the tales of old times and never to be forgotten adventures, when he and Captain Jonas Marck wore the wooden bowl beneath the banner of the "Beggars of the Sea."

THE END.





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